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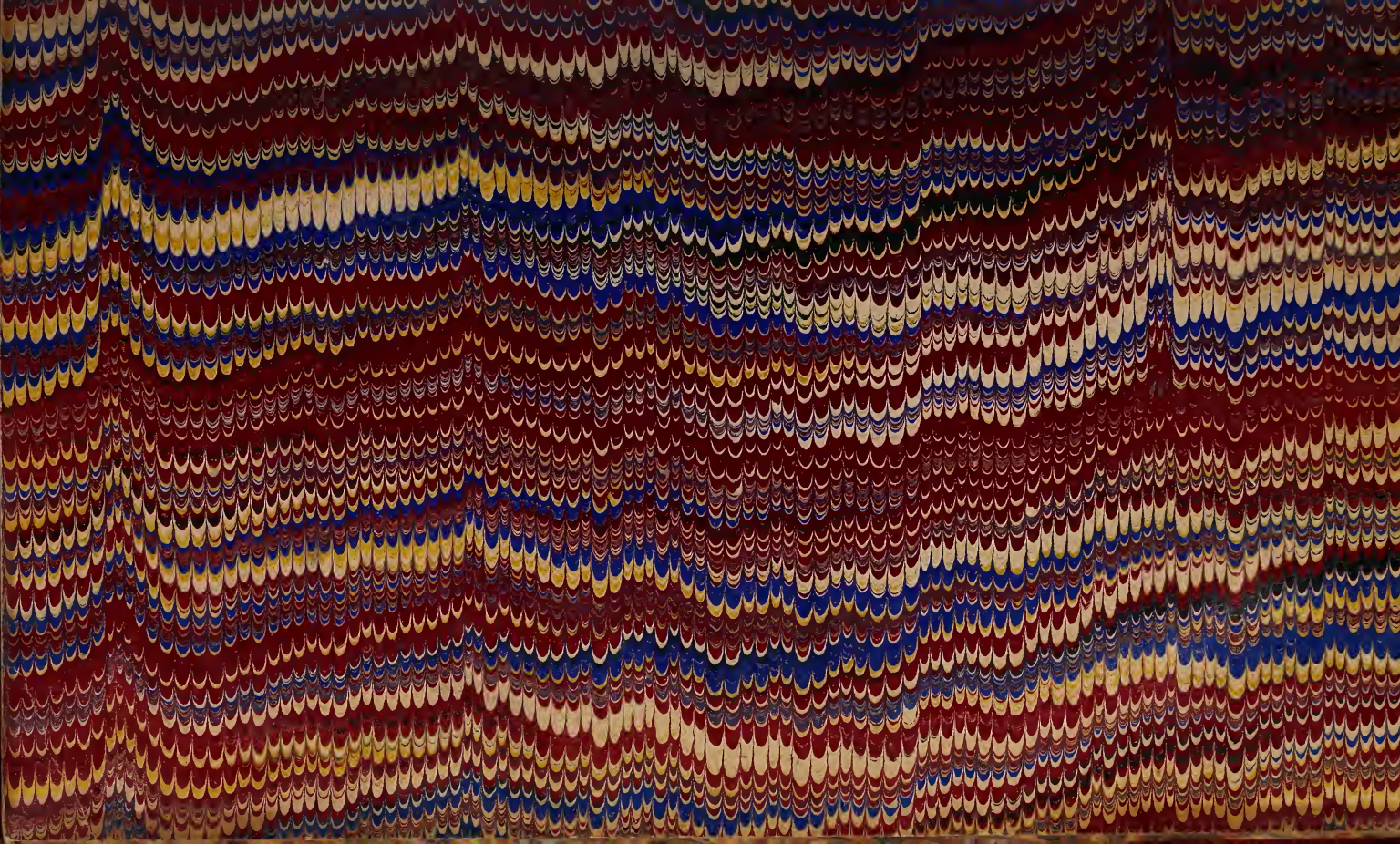

THE MONITOR;

OR,

USEFUL EXTRACTS

ON

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

WILLIAM HUMBLE.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.—*Prov.* i. 7.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.—*Prov.* iii. 6.
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.—*Psalm* ci. 2.

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PREFACE.

During the necessarily many unoccupied hours which present themselves in the course of an Indian voyage, the Compiler of the following sheets conceived he could not more usefully employ his time than in selecting from various esteemed Authors such extracts as, by being brought together within the compass of a small volume, might be generally accessible, and not altogether unserviceable, to his friends and the public at large. The labour of compilation has certainly not been considerable, the principal difficulty consisting in the necessity of omitting, rather than ex-

tracting, much useful matter. The sincere desire of the Compiler is, that the work may not be found entirely unworthy of the extensive patronage it has received.

The extracts are suited to persons of all ages, but particularly to youth, and are well adapted to the use of schools for Sunday reading; and in case of sufficient orders being received, a cheap edition will be published for this purpose, containing fifty additional pages.

With respect to the extracts from Dr. Porteus's valuable Lectures, it is strongly recommended to every one, where convenient, to have the originals.

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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The Bible is not indeed a plan of religion delineated with minute accuracy to instruct men as in something altogether new, or to excite a vain admiration and applause; but it is somewhat unspeakably more great and noble, comprehending in the grandest and most magnificent order, along with every essential of that plan, the various dispensations of God to mankind, from the formation of this earth to the consummation of all things. Other books may afford us much entertainment and much instruction; may gratify our curiosity, may delight our imagination, may improve our understandings, may calm our passions, may exalt our sentiments, may even improve our hearts: but they have not, they cannot have that authority in what they affirm, in what they require, in what they promise and threaten that the Scriptures have. There is a peculiar

weight and energy in *them*, which is not to be found in any other writings. Their denunciations are more awful, their convictions stronger, their consolations more powerful, their counsels more authentic, their warnings more alarming, their expostulations more penetrating. There are passages in them throughout so sublime, so pathetic, full of such energy and force upon the heart and conscience, yet without the least appearance of labour and study for that purpose; indeed the design of the whole is so noble, so well suited to the sad condition of human kind; the morals have in them such purity and dignity; the doctrines, so many of them above reason, yet so perfectly reconcilable with it; the expression is so majestic, yet familiarized with such easy simplicity, that the more we read and study these writings with suitable dispositions and judicious attention, the more we shall see and feel of the hand of God in them. But that which stamps upon them the highest value, that which renders them, strictly speaking, inestimable, and distinguishes them from all other books in the world, is this, that they, and they only, "contain the words of eter-

nal life." In this respect, every other book, even the noblest compositions of man, must fail us, they cannot give us that which we most want, and what is of infinitely more importance to us than all other things put together, *eternal life*. This we must look for no where but in Scripture. It is there, and there only, that we are informed, from authority, of the immortality of the soul, of a general resurrection from the dead, of a future judgment, of a state of eternal happiness to the good, and of eternal misery to the bad. It is there we are informed of the fall of our first parents from a state of innocence and happiness; with the guilt, corruption, and misery which this sad event brought on all their posterity; which, together with their own personal and voluntary transgressions, rendered them obnoxious to God's severest punishments. But, to our inexpressible comfort, we are farther told in this divine book that God is full of mercy, compassion, and goodness; that he is not extreme to mark what is done amiss; that he willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and save his soul alive. In pity, there-

fore, to mankind, he was pleased to provide a remedy for their dreadful state. He was pleased to adopt a measure which should at once satisfy his justice, show his extreme abhorrence of sin, make a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, and release all who accepted the terms proposed to them from the punishment they had deserved. This was nothing less than the death of his son Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world to take our nature upon him, to teach us a most holy, pure, and benevolent religion, to reform us both by his precepts and example; and, lastly, to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification. By him and his evangelists and apostles we are assured, that if we sincerely repent of our sins, and firmly believe in him and his gospel, we shall, for the sake of his sufferings and his righteousness, have all our transgressions forgiven and blotted out, shall be *justified*, that is considered as innocent in the sight of God, shall have the assistance of his Holy Spirit for our future conduct; and if we persevere to the end in a uniform (though from the infirmity of our nature imperfect) obedience to all the laws of Christ,

shall, through his merits, be rewarded with everlasting glory in the life to come.

Since then the utility, the absolute necessity of reading the Scriptures is so great, since they are not only the best guide you can consult, but the only one that can possibly lead you to heaven; it becomes the indispensable duty of every one most carefully and constantly to peruse these sacred oracles, that you may thereby "become perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." They who have much leisure should employ a considerable portion of it in this holy exercise, and even those who are most immersed in business have, or ought to have, the Lord's Day entirely to spare, and should always employ some part of it in reading and meditating on the word of God. By persevering steadily in this practice, every one may, in no great length of time, read the Scriptures through, from one end to the other. But in doing this it will be advisable to begin with the New Testament, and to read it over most frequently, because it concerns us Christians the more nearly, and explains to us more fully and more clearly the words of eternal life. But after you

have once gone regularly through both the Old Testament and the New, it may then be most useful, perhaps, to select out of each such passages as lay before you the great fundamental doctrines, and most essential duties of your Christian profession, and even among these, to dwell the longest on such as express these things in the most awful and striking manner, such as affect and touch you most powerfully, such as make your heart burn within you, and stir up all the pious affections in your soul. But it will be of little use to *read*, unless at the same time also you *reflect*: unless you apply what you read to those great purposes which the Scriptures were meant to promote, the amendment of your faults, the improvement of your hearts, and the salvation of your souls.

LECTURE II.

ON THE COMMANDMENTS.

The commandments are of such importance that, let our faith be what it will, unless it influence our lives, it will be of no value; at the same time, if it be what it ought to be, it will certainly have this influence.

On this head the ten commandments are first placed before us; and though we cannot call the decalogue a complete rule of duty, we accept it with the utmost reverence, as the first great written law that ever God communicated to man. We consider it as an eternal monument inscribed by the finger of God himself; not defining the minutiæ of morals, but enjoining those great duties only which have the most particular influence upon the happiness of society; and prohibiting those enormous crimes which are the greatest sources of its distress.

The ten commandments are divided into two parts, from their being originally written upon two tables; the four first are contained

in the first table; the remaining six in the second.

At the head of them stands a prohibition to acknowledge more than one God.

The second commandment bears a near relation to the first, and forbids idolatry.

The third commandment enjoins reverence to God's name. This is a strong religious restraint in private life, and as a solemn oath is the strictest obligation among men, nothing can be of greater service to society than to hold it in general respect.

The fourth commands the observance of the Sabbath, as one of the best means of preserving a sense of God and of religion in the minds of men.

The second table begins with enjoining obedience to parents.

The five next commandments are prohibitions of the most capital crimes, which pollute the heart of man, and injure the peace of society.

The seventh commandment forbids adultery; the black infidelity and injury which accompany this crime, the confusion in families which often succeeds it, and the general tendency it hath to destroy all the domestic

happiness of society, stain it with a very high degree of guilt.

The security of our property is the object of the eighth commandment.

The security of our characters is the object of the ninth.

The tenth restrains us not only from the actual commission of sin, but from those bad inclinations which give it birth.

LECTURE III.

RELATIVE DUTIES.

After the commandments, let us consider "our duty to God" and "our duty to our neighbour;" the latter of which might more properly be entitled "our duty to our neighbour and to ourselves." These seem intended as an explanation of the commandments upon Christian principles, with the addition of other duties which do not properly fall under them. On these we shall be more large.

The first part of our duty to God is to believe in him, which is the foundation of all

religion, and therefore offers itself first to our consideration.

BELIEF OF GOD.

The being of a God is one of those truths which scarce require proof; a proof seems rather an injury, as it supposes doubt; however as young minds are uninformed, we select, out of a variety of arguments, two or three of the most simple.

We prove the being of a God, first from the creation of the world; the world must have been produced either by chance or design; let us see with which of these characters it is impressed.

The characteristic of the works of design is a relation of parts, in order to produce an end; the characteristic of the works of chance is just the reverse. When we see stones answering each other, laid in the form of a regular building, we immediately say they were put together by design; but if we see them thrown about in a disorderly heap, we say as confidently they have been thrown so by chance.

Now in the world, and all its appendages, there is plainly this appearance of design;

one part relates to another, and the whole together produces an end.

Nor is design shown only in the grand fabric of the world, and all its relative appendages; it is equally shown in every part. It is seen in every animal, in every vegetable. In the least as well as the greatest of nature's productions, it is every where apparent.

If then the world, and every part of it, are thus marked with the character of design, there can be no difficulty in acknowledging the author of such design.

The argument drawn from the preservation of the world is indeed rather the last argument advanced a step farther.

If chance could be supposed to produce a regular form, yet it is certainly beyond the highest degree of credulity to suppose it could continue this regularity for any time. The sun's action upon the earth hath ever been regular, the production of trees, plants, and herbs hath ever been uniform. Every seed now produces the same fruit it ever did. Every species of animal life is still the same. Could chance continue this regular arrangement? Could any thing continue it, but the hand of an omnipotent God?

Lastly, we see this great truth, the being of a God, witnessed by the general consent of mankind. It can scarce be supposed that all mankind, in different parts of the world, should agree in the belief of a thing which never existed.

The atheist's great argument, indeed, against a Deity, is levelled at the apparent injustice of his government. It was an objection of ancient date, and might have had its weight in heathen times; but it is one of the blessings which attend Christianity, that it satisfies all our doubts on this head. What if we observe an inaccurate distribution of the things of this world? What if virtue be depressed, and vice triumphant? It is nothing, says the voice of religion, to him who believes this life to be an inconsiderable part of his being; who believes he is sent into this world merely to prepare himself for a better. This world, he knows, is intended neither for reward nor punishment. Happiness unquestionably attends virtue even here, and misery vice; but it is not the happiness of a splendid station, but of a peaceful mind; nor is it the misery of low circumstances, but of a guilty conscience.

But for just notions of the Deity we must have recourse to revelation alone. Revelation removes all absurdities which have prevailed on the subject. It dispels the clouds of ignorance, and unveils the Divine Majesty, as far as it can be the object of human contemplation. Here we are informed of the omniscience and omnipresence of God. Here we learn that his wisdom and power are equalled by his goodness, and that his mercy is over all his works. In short, we learn from revelation that we are in the hands of a being whose knowledge we cannot evade, and whose power we cannot resist; who is merciful and good to all his creatures; and who will ever be ready to reward those who endeavour to conform themselves to his will; but whose justice, at the same time accompanying his mercy, will punish the bold and careless sinner in proportion to his guilt.

The next branch of our duty to God is to fear him. The fear of God is impressed equally upon the righteous man and the sinner; but the fear of the sinner consists only in the dread of punishment. It is the necessary consequence of guilt; and is not

that fear which we consider as a duty. The fear of God here meant consists in that reverential awe, that constant apprehension of his presence, which secures us from offending him. If a sense of the divine presence hath such an influence over us as to check the bad tendency of our thoughts, words, and actions, we may properly be said to be impressed with the fear of God. If not, we neglect one of the best means of checking vice which the whole circle of religious restraint affords.

The next duty to God is that of love, which is founded upon his goodness to his creatures; even this world, mixed as it is with evil, exhibits various marks of the goodness of the Deity. Most men, indeed, place their affections too much upon it, and rate it at too high a value; but, in the opinion even of wise men, it deserves some estimation.

Let this world, however, go for little. In contemplating a future life, the enjoyments of this are lost. It is in the contemplation of futurity that the Christian views the goodness of God in the fullest light. When he sees the Deity engaging himself by covenant

to make our short abode here a preparation for our eternal happiness hereafter; when he is assured that this happiness is not only eternal, but of the purest and most perfect kind; when he sees God, as a father, opening all his stores of love and kindness, to bring back to himself a race of creatures fallen from their original perfection, and totally lost through their own folly, perverseness, and wickedness; then it is that the evils of life seem as atoms in the sunbeam; the divine nature appears overflowing with goodness to mankind, and calls forth every exertion of our gratitude and love.

There remains one farther consideration with regard to the love of God, and that is the measure of it. We are told we ought to love him "with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength;" these are strong expressions, and seem to imply a greater warmth of affection than many people may perhaps find they can exert. The affections of some are naturally cool, and little excited by any objects. The guilty person is he whose affections are warm in every thing but religion. The obvious mean-

ing, therefore, of the expression is, that whether our affections are cool or warm, we should make God our chief good; that we should set our affections more upon him than upon any thing else, and that for his sake, and for the sake of his laws, we should be ready to resign every thing we have, and even life itself.

LECTURE IV.

WORSHIP AND HONOUR OF GOD.

Our next duty to God is, to worship him, to give him thanks, to put our whole trust in him, and to call upon him.

Since the observance of the Sabbath is founded upon many wise and just reasons, what have they to answer for who not only neglect this institution themselves, but bring it, by their example, into contempt with others? I speak not to those who make it a day of common diversion; who, laying aside all decency, and breaking through all civil and religious regulations, spend it in the most licentious amusements: such people

are past all reproof; but I speak to those who in other things profess themselves to be serious people; and, one might hope, would act rightly when they were convinced what was so.

But our prayers, whether in public or in private, are only an idle parade, unless we put our trust in God.

By putting our trust in God, is meant depending upon him as our happiness and our refuge.

Nothing in this world is a sufficient foundation for trust: nor, indeed, can any thing be so but Almighty God, who affords the only means of happiness, and is our only real refuge in distress.

On him, the more we trust, the greater we shall feel our security; and that man who has, on just religious motives, confirmed in himself this trust, wants nothing else to secure his happiness. The world may wear what aspect it will; it is not on it that he depends. As far as prudence goes, he endeavours to avoid the evils of life; but when they fall to his share (as sooner or later we must all share them), he resigns himself into the hands of that God who made him, and

who knows best how to dispose of him. On him he thoroughly depends, and with him he has a constant intercourse by prayer; trusting that whatever happens is agreeable to that just government which God has established, and that of consequence it must be best.

We are enjoined "to honour God's holy name."

The name of God is accompanied with such ideas of greatness and reverence, that it should never pass our lips without suggesting those ideas. Indeed it should never be mentioned but with a kind of awful hesitation, and on the most solemn occasions; either in serious discourse, or when we invoke God in prayer, or when we swear by his name.

In this last light we are here particularly enjoined to honour the name of the Lord. A solemn oath is an appeal to God himself, and is entitled to our utmost respect, if only in a political light; as in all human concerns it is the strongest test of veracity, and has been approved as such by the wisdom of all nations.

An oath, therefore, taken in a solemn

manner, and on a proper occasion, may be considered as one of the highest acts of religion; so perjury, or false swearing, is certainly one of the highest acts of impiety, and the greatest dishonour we can show to the name of God. It is in fact either denying our belief in a God, or his power to punish. Other crimes wish to escape the notice of heaven; this is daring the Almighty to his face.

After perjury, the name of God is most dishonoured by the horrid practice of cursing. Its effects in society, it is true, are not so mischievous as those of perjury; nor is it so deliberate an act; but yet it conveys a still more horrible idea. Indeed, if there be one wicked practice more peculiarly diabolical than another, it is this. If this shocking vice were not so dreadfully familiar to our ears, it could not fail to strike us with the utmost horror.

We next consider common swearing; a sin so universally practised, that one would imagine some great advantage, in the way either of pleasure or profit, attended it. The wages of iniquity afford some temptation: but to commit sin without any temptation

is a strange species of infatuation. May we then ask the common swearer what the advantages are which arise from this practice?

Some forward youth may think that an oath adds an air and spirit to his discourse, that it is manly and important, and gives him consequence. We may whisper one secret in his ear, which he may be assured is a truth: these airs of manliness give him consequence only with those whose commendation is disgrace: others, he only convinces at how early an age he wishes to be thought profligate.

Common swearing leads to perjury. He who is addicted to swear on every trifling occasion, cannot but often, I had almost said unavoidably, give the sanction of an oath to an untruth.

Common swearing is an act of great irreverence to God; and, as such, implying also a great indifference to religion. If we lose our reverence for God, it is impossible we can retain it for his laws.

But above all, we should be deterred from common swearing by the positive command of our Saviour, which is founded unques-

tionably upon the wickedness of the practice: "You have heard," said Christ, "that it hath been said of them of old time, thou shall not forswear thyself; but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, neither by the earth, for it is his footstool; but let your communication" (that is your ordinary conversation) "be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

I shall just add, before I conclude this subject, that two things are to be avoided, which are very nearly allied to swearing.

The first is, the use of light exclamations and invocations upon God, on every trivial occasion. We cannot have much reverence for God, when we treat his name in so familiar a manner; and may assure ourselves that we are indulging a practice which must weaken impressions that ought to be preserved as strongly as possible.

Secondly, such light expressions and wanton phrases, as sound like swearing, are to be avoided, and are often therefore indulged by silly people, for the sake of the sound; who think (if they think at all) that they add to their discourse the spirit of swearing

without the guilt of it. Such people had better lay aside, together with swearing, every appearance of it. These appearances may both offend and mislead others; and, with regard to themselves, may end in realities: at least they show an inclination to swearing; and an inclination to vice indulged is really vice.

LECTURE V.

HONOUR DUE TO GOD'S WORD—WHAT IT IS TO SERVE GOD TRULY, ETC.

As we are enjoined to honour God's holy name, so are we enjoined also "to honour his holy word."

By God's holy word, we mean the Old Testament and the New.

The books of the Old Testament open with the earliest accounts of time, earlier than any human records reach; and yet, in many instances, they are strengthened by human records.

In the history of the patriarchs is exhibited a most beautiful picture of the simplicity of

ancient manners, and of genuine nature, unadorned indeed by science, but impressed strongly with a sense of religion.

The patriarchal history is followed by the Jewish; here we find those types and representations which the apostle to the Hebrews calls the shadow of good things to come.

To these books, which contain the legislation and history of the Jews, succeed the prophetic writings. The office of the Messiah, his ministry, his life, his actions, his death, and his resurrection, are all very distinctly held out.

To these books are added several others, poetical and moral, which administer much instruction and matter of meditation to devout minds.

The New Testament contains, first, the simple history of Christ, as recorded in the four Gospels. In this history also are delivered those excellent instructions which our Saviour occasionally gave his disciples, the precepts and the example blended together.

To the Gospels succeeds an account of the lives and actions of some of the principal

apostles, together with the early state of the Christian church.

The epistles of several of the apostles, particularly of St. Paul, to some of the newly established churches, make another part. Our Saviour had promised to endow his disciples with power from on high, to complete the great work of publishing the Gospel, and in the epistles that work is completed. The truths and doctrines of the Christian religion are here still more unfolded and enforced, as the great scheme of our redemption was now finished by the death of Christ.

The sacred volume is concluded with the revelations of St. John; which are supposed to contain a prophetic description of the future state of the church. Some of these prophecies it is thought, on very good grounds, are already fulfilled; and others, which now, as sublime descriptions only, amuse our imaginations, will probably, in the future ages of the church, be the objects of the understanding also.

The last part of our duty to God is, "to serve him truly all the days of our life."

To serve God truly all the days of our

life implies two things: first, the mode of this service; and, secondly, the term of it.

First, we must serve God truly. We must not rest satisfied with the outward action, but must take care that every action be founded on a proper motive. It is the motive alone that makes an action acceptable with God. God requires the heart: he requires that an earnest desire of acting agreeably to his will should be the general spring of our actions; and this will give even an indifferent action a value in his sight.

As we are enjoined to serve God truly, so are we enjoined to serve him "all the days of our life." Human errors and frailties, we know, God will not treat with too severe an eye; but he who, in the general tenor of his life, does not keep advancing towards Christian perfection, but suffers himself, at intervals, entirely to lose sight of his calling, cannot be really serious in his profession; he is at a great distance from serving God truly all the days of his life, and has no scriptural ground to hope much from the mercy of God.

That man, whether placed in high estate or low, has reached the summit of human

happiness who is truly serious in the service of his great Master. The things of this world may engage, but cannot engross his attention; its sorrows and its joys may affect, but cannot disconcert him.

The world may sooth, or it may threaten him; he perseveres steadily in the service of his God, and in that perseverance feels his happiness every day the more established.

LECTURE VI.

DUTY OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS, ETC.

From the two grand principles of "loving our neighbour as ourselves," and "doing to others as we would have them do to us," which regulate our social intercourse in general, we proceed to those more confined duties which arise from particular relations, connections, and stations in life.

Among these we are first taught, as indeed the order of nature directs, to consider the great duty of children to parents.

The two points to be insisted on, are re-

spect and obedience. Both these should naturally spring from love, to which parents have the highest claim.

But if the kindness of the parent be not such as to work upon the affections of the child, yet still the parent has a title to respect and obedience, on the principle of duty; a principle which the word of God strictly commands.

The child will show respect to his parent by treating him at all times with deference. He will consult his parent's inclination, and show a readiness, in a thousand nameless trifles, to conform himself to it. He will never peevishly contradict his parent; and when he offers a contrary opinion, he will offer it modestly. Respect will teach him also not only to put the best colouring upon the infirmities of his parent; but even if those infirmities be very great, it will soften and screen them, as much as possible, from the public eye.

Obedience goes a step farther, and supposes a positive command. In things unlawful, indeed, the parental authority cannot bind: but this is a case that rarely happens. The great danger is on the other side, that

children, through obstinacy or sullenness, should refuse their parents' lawful commands; to the observance of all which, however inconvenient to themselves, they are tied by various motives; and, above all, by the command of God, who, in his sacred denunciations against sin, ranks disobedience to parents among the worst.

They are farther bound not only to obey the commands of their parents, but to obey them cheerfully.

There remains still a third part of filial duty, which peculiarly belongs to children when grown up. This the catechism calls succouring or administering to the necessities of the parent, either in the way of managing his affairs, when he is less able to manage them himself, or in supplying his wants, should he need assistance in that way. The hypocritical Jew would sometimes evade this duty, by dedicating to sacred uses what should have been expended in assisting his parent. Our Saviour sharply rebukes this perversion of duty; and gives him to understand, that no pretence of serving God can cover the neglect of assisting a parent. And if no pretence of serving God can do it,

surely every other pretence must still be more unnatural.

Under this head, also, we may consider that attention and love which are due to other relations; especially that mutual affection which should subsist among brothers.

The name of brother expresses the highest degree of tenderness, and is generally used in Scripture as a term of peculiar endearment to call men to the practice of social virtue. It reminds them of every kindness which man can show to man. If, then, we ought to treat all mankind with the affection of brothers, in what light must they appear, who, being really such, are ever at variance with each other, continually doing spiteful actions, and showing, upon every occasion, not only a want of brotherly kindness, but even of common regard.

LECTURE VII.

DUTY TO OUR TEACHERS, ETC.

By our "teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters," are meant all those who have the care of our education, and of our instruction in religion; whom we are to obey and listen to with humility and attention, as the means of our advancement in knowledge and religion.

The duty which young people owe to their instructors cannot be shown better than in the effect which the instructions they receive have upon them.

The great use of knowledge, in all its various branches, is to free the mind from the prejudices of ignorance. It is the improvement of the mind chiefly that makes the difference between man and man, and gives one man a real superiority over another.

Besides, the mind must be employed; a vacant mind is exactly that house mentioned in the Gospel, which the devil found

empty. In he entered, and taking with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, they took possession. It is an undoubted truth, that one vice indulged introduces others, and that each succeeding vice becomes more depraved.

If, then, the mind must be employed, what can fill up its vacuities more rationally than the acquisition of knowledge?

Let us, therefore, thank God for the opportunities he hath afforded us, and not turn into a curse those means of leisure which might become so great a blessing.

But however necessary to us knowledge may be, religion, we know, is infinitely more so. The one adorns a man, and gives him, it is true, superiority and rank in life; but the other is absolutely essential to his happiness.

In the midst of youth, health, and abundance, the world is apt to appear a very gay and pleasing scene; it engages our desires, and in a degree satisfies them also. But it is wisdom to consider that a time will come when youth, health, and fortune will all fail us: and if disappointment and vexation do not sour our taste for pleasure, at least sick-

ness and infirmities will destroy it. In these gloomy seasons, and above all, at the approach of death, what will become of us without religion? When this world fails, where shall we fly, if we expect no refuge in another? Without holy hope in God, and resignation to his will, and trust in him for deliverance, what is there that can secure us against the evils of life?

Youth is not more the season to acquire knowledge than to form religious habits. It is a great point to get habit on the side of virtue: it will make every thing smooth and easy. The earliest principles are generally the most lasting; and those of a religious cast are seldom wholly lost. Though the temptations of the world may, now and then, draw the well principled youth aside, yet his principles being continually at war with his practice, there is hope that in the end the better part may overcome the worse, and bring on a reformation.

To conclude, our youth bears the same proportion to our more advanced life as this world does to the next. In this life we must form and cultivate those habits of virtue which must qualify us for a better state. If

we neglect them here, and contract habits of an opposite kind, instead of gaining that exalted state which is promised to our improvement, we shall of course sink into that state which is adapted to the habits we have formed. If we cultivate our minds in our youth, attain habits of attention and industry, of virtue and sobriety, we shall find ourselves well prepared to act our future parts of life; and what above all things ought to be our care, by gaining this command over ourselves, we shall be more able, as we get forward in the world, to resist every new temptation as it arises.

LECTURE VIII.

BEHAVIOUR TO SUPERIORS.

We are enjoined "to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters."

By our betters are meant those who are in a superior station of life to our own; and by "ordering ourselves lowly and reverently towards them," is meant paying them that respect which is due to their station.

The word "betters," indeed, includes two kinds of persons to whom our respect is due, those who have a natural claim to it, and those who have an acquired one; that is, a claim arising from some particular situation in life.

Among the first are all our superior relations who are in a line above us: all these have a natural claim to our respect. There is a respect also due from youth to age, which is always becoming, and tends to keep youth within the bounds of modesty.

It is due also from many other situations in life: employments, honours, and even wealth will exact it; and all may justly exact it in a proper degree.

But it may here, perhaps, be inquired why God should permit this latter distinction among men?

Though we can but very inadequately trace the wisdom of God in his works, yet very wise reasons appear for this variety in the gifts of fortune. It seems necessary both in a civil and in a moral light.

Providence, in scattering these various gifts, proposes ultimately the good of man, and it is our duty to acquiesce in this order,

and "to behave ourselves lowly and reverently (not with servility, but with a decent respect) to all our superiors."

Before I conclude this subject it may be proper to observe, in vindication of the ways of Providence, that we are not to suppose happiness and misery necessarily connected with riches and poverty. Each condition hath its particular sources both of pleasure and pain, unknown to the other. Those in elevated stations have a thousand latent pangs of which their inferiors have no idea; while their inferiors again have as many pleasures which the others cannot taste. I speak only of such modes of happiness or misery as arise immediately from different stations. Of misery, indeed, from a variety of other causes, all men of every station are equal heirs; either when God lays his hand upon us in sickness or misfortune, or when by our own follies and vices we become the ministers of our own distress.

Let each of us, then, do his duty in that station which Providence has assigned him; ever remembering that the next world will soon destroy all earthly distinctions. One

distinction only will remain among the sons of men at that time—the distinction between good and bad; and this distinction it is worth all our pains and all our ambition to acquire.

LECTURE IX.

AGAINST WRONGING OUR NEIGHBOUR BY INJURIOUS WORDS.

We are instructed "to hurt nobody by word or deed, to be true and just in all our dealings, to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts, to keep our hands from picking and stealing, our tongues from evil speaking, lying, and slandering."

The duties comprehended in these words are a little transposed; what should class under one head is brought under another. "To hurt nobody by word or deed" is the general proposition. The under parts should follow, first, "to keep the tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering;" which is "to hurt nobody by word:" secondly, "to

be true and just in all our dealings," and "to keep our hands from picking and stealing," which is "to hurt nobody by deed." As to the injunction, "to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts," it properly belongs to neither of these heads, but is a distinct one by itself.

The duties being thus separated, I shall proceed to explain them.

And, first, of injuring our neighbour by our "words." This may be done, we find, in three ways, "by evil speaking, by lying, and by slandering."

By "evil speaking" is meant speaking ill of our neighbour, but upon a supposition that this ill is the truth. In some circumstances it is certainly right to speak ill of our neighbour; as when we are called upon in a court of justice to give our evidence; or when we can set any one right in his opinion of a person in whom he is about to put an improper confidence. Nor can there be any harm in speaking of a bad action, which has been determined in a court of justice, or is otherwise become notorious.

But, on the contrary, it is highly disallowable to speak wantonly of the characters of

others from common fame; because, in a thousand instances, we find that stories, which have no better foundation, are misrepresented. They are, perhaps, only half told; they have been heard through the medium of malice or envy; some favourable circumstance hath been omitted; some foreign circumstance hath been added; some trifling circumstance hath been exaggerated; the motive, the provocation, or perhaps the reparation, hath been concealed: in short, the representation of the fact is, some way or other, totally different from the fact itself.

But even when we have the best evidence of a bad action, with all its circumstances before us, we surely indulge a very ill natured pleasure in spreading the shame of an offending brother. We can do no good, and we may do harm; we may weaken his good resolutions by exposing him; we may harden him against the world. Perhaps it may be his first bad action. Perhaps nobody is privy to it but ourselves. Let us give him at least one trial. Let us not cast the first stone. Which of our lives could stand so strict a scrutiny? he only who is

without sin himself can have any excuse for treating his brother with severity.

Let us next consider "lying," which is an intention to deceive by falsehood in our words. To warn us against lying we should do well to consider the folly, the meanness, and the wickedness of it.

The folly of lying consists in its defeating its own purpose. A habit of lying is generally in the end detected; and after detection the liar, instead of deceiving, will not even be believed when he happens to speak the truth. Nay, every single lie is attended with such a variety of circumstances which lead to a detection, that it is often discovered. The use generally made of a lie is to cover a fault, but as the end is seldom answered, we only aggravate what we wish to conceal. In point even of prudence an honest confession would serve us better.

The meanness of lying arises from the cowardice which it implies. We dare not boldly and nobly speak the truth; but have recourse to low subterfuges, which always argue a sordid and disingenuous mind.

The wickedness of lying consists in its perverting one of the greatest blessings of

God, the use of speech, in making that a mischief to mankind, which was intended for a benefit. Truth is the great bond of society. Falsehood, of course, tends to its dissolution.

An equivocation is nearly related to a lie. It is an intention to deceive under words of a double meaning, or words which, literally speaking, are true; and is equally criminal with the most downright breach of truth. When St. Peter asked Sapphira (in the fifth chapter of the Acts) "whether her husband had sold the land for so much?" She answered he had: and literally she spoke the truth; for he had sold it for that sum, included in a larger. But having an intention to deceive, we find the apostle considered the equivocation as a lie.

In short, it is the intention to deceive which is criminal; a nod, or sign, may convey a lie as effectually as the most deceitful language.

Under the head of lying may be mentioned a breach of promise. While a resolution remains in our own breasts it is subject to our own review; but when we make another person a party with us, an engage-

ment is made; and every engagement, though only of the slightest kind, should be punctually observed. If we have added to this engagement a solemn promise, the obligation is so much the stronger; and he who does not think himself bound by such an obligation has no pretensions to the character of an honest man. A breach of promise is still worse than a lie: a lie is a breach of truth; but a breach of promise is a breach both of truth and trust.

Forgetfulness is a weak excuse: it only shows how little we are affected by so solemn an engagement.

Having considered evil speaking and lying, let us next consider slandering. By slandering, we mean injuring our neighbour's character by falsehood. Here we still rise higher in the scale of injurious words. Slandering our neighbour is the greatest injury which words can do him; and is therefore worse than either evil speaking or lying. The mischief of this sin depends on the value of our characters. All men, unless they be past feeling, desire to be thought well of by their fellow creatures; a good character is one of the principal means of

being serviceable either to ourselves or others; and among numbers the very bread they eat depends upon it. What aggravated injury, therefore, do we bring upon every man whose name we slander. And what is still worse, the injury is irreparable. If you defraud a man, restore what you take, and the injury is repaired; but if you slander him, it is not in your power to shut up all the ears and all the mouths to which your tale may have access. The evil spreads like the winged seeds of some noxious plants, which scatter mischief on a breath of air, and disperse it on every side, and beyond prevention.

Before we conclude this subject it may just be mentioned that a slander may be spread, as a lie may be told, in various ways. We may do it by an insinuation, as well as in a direct manner, we may spread it in a secret, or propagate it under the colour of friendship.

I may add, also, that it is a species of slander, and often a very malignant one, to lesson the merits or exaggerate the failings of others; as it is likewise to omit defending a misrepresented character, or to let others bear the blame of our offences.

LECTURE X.

AGAINST WRONGING OUR NEIGHBOUR BY INJURIOUS ACTIONS.

HAVING thus considered injurious words, let us next consider injurious actions. On this head we are enjoined "to keep our hands from picking and stealing, and to be true and just in all our dealings."

As to theft, it is a crime of so odious and vile a nature that one would imagine no person who hath had the least tincture of a virtuous education, even though driven to necessity, could be led into it. I shall not, therefore, enter into a dissuasive from this crime; but go on with the explanation of the other part of the injunction, and to see what it is "to be true and just in all our dealings."

Justice is even still more, if possible, the support of society than truth; inasmuch as a man may be more injurious by his actions than by his words.

We very much err if we suppose that every thing within the bounds of law is justice. The law was intended only for bad men; and it is impossible to make the meshes of it so strait, but that many very great enormities will escape. The well meaning man, therefore, knowing that the law was not made for him, consults a better guide, his own conscience, informed by religion. And indeed, the great difference between the good man and the bad consists in this: the good man will do nothing but what his conscience will allow, the bad man will do any thing which the law cannot reach.

It would, indeed, be endless to describe the various ways in which a man may be dishonest within the limits of law. They are as various as our intercourse with mankind. Some of the most obvious of them I shall cursorily mention.

In matters of commerce the knave has many opportunities. The different qualities of the same commodity, the different modes of adulteration, the specious arts of vending, the frequent ignorance in purchasing, and a variety of other circumstances, open an endless field to the ingenuity of fraud. The

honest, fair dealer, in the mean time, has only one rule, which is, that all arts, however common in business, which are intended to deceive, are utterly unlawful. It may be added upon this head, that if any one, conscious of having been a transgressor, is desirous of repairing his fault, restitution is by all means necessary; till that be done, he continues in a course of injustice.

It is an injustice to withhold a debt when we have ability to pay, or to run into debt when we have not that ability. The former can proceed only from a bad disposition; the latter from suffering our desires to exceed our station.

Oppression is another species of injustice, by which, in a thousand ways, under cover of law, we may take the advantage of the superiority of our power, either to crush an inferior or humble him to our designs.

Ingratitude is another. A loan, we know, claims a legal return. And is the obligation less if, instead of a loan, you receive a kindness? The law, indeed, says nothing on this point of immorality; but an honest conscience will be very loud in the condemnation of it.

We may be unjust also in our resentment, by carrying it beyond what reason and religion prescribe.

But it would be endless to describe the various ways in which injustice discovers itself. In truth, almost every omission of duty may be resolved into injustice.

The next precept is "to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts."

The malice and hatred of our hearts arise, in the first place, from injurious treatment; and surely no man when he is injured can at first help feeling that he is so. But Christianity requires that we should subdue these feelings as soon as possible, "and not suffer the sun to go down upon our wrath." Various are the passages of Scripture which inculcate the forgiveness of injuries. Indeed no point is more laboured than this, and with reason, because no temper is more productive of evil, both to ourselves and others, than a malicious one. The sensations of a mind burning with revenge are beyond description; and as we are at these seasons very unable to judge coolly, and of course liable to carry our resentment too far, the consequence is that, in our rage, we may do

a thousand things which can never be atoned for, and of which we may repent as long as we live.

Besides, one act draws on another, and retaliation keeps the quarrel alive. The gospel, therefore, ever gracious and kind to man, in all its precepts enjoins us to check all those violent emotions, and to leave our cause in the hands of God. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord;" and he who, in opposition to this precept, takes vengeance into his hands, and cherishes the malice and hatred of his heart, may assure himself that he has not learned to be a Christian.

But besides injurious treatment, the malice and hatred of our hearts have often another source, and that is envy: and thus in the Litany, "envy, malice, and hatred" are all joined together with great propriety. The emotions of envy are generally cooler and less violent than those which arise from the resentment of injury; so that envy is seldom so mischievous in its effect as revenge; but with regard to ourselves it is altogether as bad, and full as destructive of the spirit of Christianity. What is the religion of that

man, who, instead of thanking Heaven for the blessings he receives, is fretting himself continually with a disagreeable comparison between himself and some other? He cannot enjoy what he has, because another has more wealth, a fairer fame, or perhaps more merit than himself. He is miserable, because others are happy.

What ignorance! We see only the glaring outside of things. Under all that envied glare, many unseen distresses may lurk, from which our station may be free: for our merciful Creator seems to have bestowed happiness, as far as station is concerned, with great equality among all his creatures.

In conclusion, therefore, let it be the great object of our attention, and the subject of our prayers, to rid our minds of all this intrusion of evil thoughts, whether they proceed from malice or from an envious temper. Let all our malicious thoughts soften into charity and benevolence; and let us "forgive one another, as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us." As for our envious thoughts, as far as they relate to externals, let them subside in humility, ac-

quiescence, and submission to the will of God. And when we are tempted to envy the good qualities of others, let us spurn so base a conception, and change into a generous emulation—into an endeavour to raise ourselves to an equality with our rival, not to depress him to a level with us.

LECTURE XI.

DUTIES TO OURSELVES.

Thus far, the duties we have considered come most properly under the head of those which we owe to our neighbour; what follow relate rather to ourselves. On this head we are instructed "to keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity."

Though our souls should be our great concern, yet, as they are nearly connected with our bodies, and as the impurity of the one contaminates the other, a great degree of moral attention is, of course, due to our bodies also.

As our first station is in this world, to

which our bodies particularly belong, they are formed with such appetites as are requisite to our commodious living in it; and the rule given us is "to use the world so as not to abuse it." St. Paul, by a beautiful allusion, calls our bodies the "temples of the Holy Ghost;" by which he means to impress us with a strong idea of their dignity; and to deter us from debasing, by low pleasures, what should be the seat of so much purity. To youth these cautions are above measure necessary, because their passions and appetites are strong, their reason and judgment weak. They are prone to pleasure, and void of reflection. How, therefore, these young adventurers in life may best steer their course, and use this sinful world so as not to abuse it, is a consideration well worth their attention—let us then see under what regulations these appetites should be restrained.

By keeping our bodies in temperance, is meant avoiding excess in eating, with regard both to the quantity and quality of our food. We should neither eat more than our stomachs can well bear, nor be nice and delicate in our eating.

To preserve the body in health is the end of eating; and they who regulate themselves merely by this end, who eat without choice or distinction, paying no regard to the pleasure of eating, observe perhaps the best rule of temperance; they go rather indeed beyond temperance, and may be called abstemious.

A man may be temperate, and yet allow himself a little more indulgence: great care, however, is here necessary; and the more, as perhaps no precise rule can be affixed after we have passed the first great limit, and let the palate loose among variety. Our own discretion must be our guide, which should be constantly kept awake, by considering the many bad consequences which attend a breach of temperance. Young men in the full vigour of health do not consider these things; but as age comes on, and different maladies begin to appear, they may perhaps repent they did not a little earlier practise the rules of temperance.

As temperance relates chiefly to eating, soberness or sobriety relates properly to drinking. And here the same observations recur. The strictest, and perhaps the best

rule, is merely to satisfy the end of drinking. But if a little more indulgence be taken, it ought to be taken with the greatest circumspection.

With regard to youth, indeed, I should be inclined to great strictness on this head. In eating, if they eat of simple food, they cannot easily err. Their growing limbs and strong exercise require larger supplies than full grown bodies, which must be kept in order by a more rigid temperance. But if more indulgence be allowed them in eating, less, surely, should in drinking. With strong liquors of every kind they have nothing to do; and if they should totally abstain on this head, it were so much the better. The languor which attends age requires, perhaps, now and then some aids; but the spirits of youth want no recruits; a little rest is sufficient.

As to the bad consequences derived from excessive drinking, besides filling the blood with bloated and vicious humours, and debauching the purity of the mind, as in the case of intemperate eating, it is attended with this peculiar evil, the loss of our senses. Hence follow frequent inconveniences and

mortifications. We expose our follies, we betray our secrets, we are often imposed upon, we quarrel with our friends, we lay ourselves open to our enemies; and, in short, make ourselves the objects of contempt, and the topics of ridicule to all our acquaintance. Nor is it only the act of intoxication which deprives us of our reason during the prevalence of it, the habit of drunkenness soon besots and impairs the understanding, and renders us at all times less fit for the offices of life.

We are next enjoined "to keep our bodies in chastity." "Flee youthful lusts," says the apostle, "which war against the soul;" and there is surely nothing which carries on a war more successfully. Wherever we have a catalogue in Scripture of those sins which in a peculiar manner debauch the mind, these youthful lusts have always, under some denomination, a place among them. To keep ourselves free from all contagion of this kind, let us endeavour to preserve a purity in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. First, let us preserve a purity in our thoughts. These dark recesses, which the eye of the world cannot reach, are the

receptacles of these youthful lusts. Here they find their first encouragement. The entrance of such impure ideas, perhaps, we cannot always prevent. We may always, however, prevent cherishing them; we may always prevent their making an impression upon us: the devil may be cast out as soon as discovered.

Let us always keep in mind that even into those dark abodes the eye of Heaven can penetrate: that every thought of our hearts is open to that God before whom we must one day stand; and that, however secretly we may indulge these impure ideas, at the great day of account they will certainly appear in awful detail against us.

But above all other considerations, it behoves us most to keep our thoughts pure, because they are the fountains from which our words and actions flow. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Obscene words and actions are only bad thoughts matured, and spring as naturally from them as the plant from its seed. It is the same vicious depravity carried a step farther, and only shows a more confirmed and a more mischievous degree of guilt.

While we keep our impurities in our thoughts they debauch only ourselves: bad enough, it is true. But when we proceed to words and actions, we let our impurities loose; we spread the contagion, and become the corrupters of others.

Let it be our first care, therefore, to keep our thoughts pure. If we do this, our words and actions will be pure of course; and that we may be the better enabled to do it, let us use such helps as reason and religion prescribe. Let us avoid all company and all books that have a tendency to corrupt our minds, and every thing that can inflame our passions. He who allows himself in these things holds a parley with vice, which will infallibly debauch him in the end, if he do not take the alarm in time, and break off such dalliance.

One thing ought to be our particular care; and that is, never to be unemployed. Ingenious amusements are of great use in filling up the vacuities of our time. Idle we should never be. A vacant mind is an invitation to vice.

LECTURE XII.

ON COVETING AND DESIRING OTHER MEN'S GOODS.

We are forbidden "to covet or desire other men's goods."

There are two great paths of vice, into which bad men commonly strike; that of unlawful pleasure, and that of unlawful gain. The paths of unlawful pleasure we have just examined, and have seen the danger of obeying the headstrong impulse of our appetites.

We have considered also an immoderate love of gain, and have seen dishonesty and fraud in a variety of shapes. But we have yet viewed them only as they relate to society. We have viewed only the outward action. The rule before us, "we must not covet nor desire other men's goods," comes a step nearer home, and considers the motive which governs the action.

Covetousness, or the love of money, is called in Scripture "the root of all evil;"

and it is called so for two reasons, because it makes us wicked, and because it makes us miserable.

First, it makes us wicked. When it once gets possession of the heart, it will let no good principle flourish near it. Most vices have their fits, and when the violence of the passion is spent, there is some interval of calm. The vicious appetite cannot always run riot: it is fatigued at last by its own impetuosity; and it is possible that in this moment of tranquillity a whisper from virtue may be heard. But in avarice there is rarely intermission: it hangs like a dead weight upon the soul, always pulling it to earth. We might as well expect to see a plant grow upon a flint, as a virtue in the heart of a miser.

It makes us miserable as well as wicked. The cares and the fears of avarice are proverbial; and it must needs be, that he who depends for happiness on what is liable to a thousand accidents, must of course feel as many distresses, and almost as many disappointments. The good man depends for happiness on something more permanent; and if his worldly affairs go ill, his great

dependance is still left. But as wealth is the god which the covetous man worships (for "covetousness," we are told, "is idolatry"), a disappointment here is a disappointment indeed. Be he ever so prosperous, his wealth cannot secure him against the evils of mortality; against that time when he must give up all he values; when the bargains of advantage will be over, and nothing left but tears and despair.

But even a desiring frame of mind, though it be not carried to such a length, is always productive of misery. It cannot be otherwise. While we suffer ourselves to be continually in quest of what we have not, it is impossible we should be happy with what we have. In a word, to abridge our wants as much as possible, not to increase them, is the truest happiness.

As covetousness is esteemed the vice of age, every appearance of it among young persons ought particularly to be discouraged; because if it gets ground at this early period, nobody can tell how far it may afterwards proceed. And yet, on the other side, there may be great danger of encouraging the opposite extreme. As it is certainly right,

under proper restrictions, both to save our money and to spend it, it would be highly useful to fix the due bounds on each side. But nothing is more difficult than to raise these nice limits between extremes; every man's case, in a thousand circumstances, differs from his neighbour's: and as no rule can be fixed for all, every man, of course, in these disquisitions, must be left to his own conscience. We are, indeed, very ready to give our opinions how others ought to act. We can adjust, with great nicety, what is proper for them to do; and point out their mistakes with much precision; while nothing is necessary to us but to act as properly as we can ourselves, observing as just a mean as possible between prodigality and avarice, and applying in all our difficulties to the word of God, where those great landmarks of morality are the most accurately fixed.

We have now taken a view of what is prohibited in our commerce with mankind: let us next see what is enjoined. Instead of spending our fortune, therefore, in unlawful pleasure, or increasing it by unlawful gain, we are required "to learn, and labour

truly (that is honestly) to get our own living, and to do our duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us." The words will be sufficiently explained by considering, first, that we all have some station in life, some particular duties to discharge; and, secondly, in what manner we ought to discharge them.

That every man was born for active life is plain from the necessity of labour. If it had not been necessary, God would not originally have imposed it. But without it the body would become enervated, and the mind corrupted. Idleness, therefore, is justly considered the origin both of disease and vice. So that if labour and employment, either of body or mind, had no use but what respected ourselves, they would be highly proper: but they have farther use.

The necessity of them is plain, from the want that all men have of the assistance of others. If so, this assistance should be mutual; every man should contribute his part. We have already seen that it is proper there should be different stations in the world—that some should be placed high in life, and others low. The lowest, we know, cannot

be exempt from labour, and the highest ought not; though their labours, according to their station, will be of a different kind. Some, we see, "must labour to get their own living, and others should do their duty in that state of life, whatever that state is, unto which it hath pleased God to call them."

All are assisted: all should assist. God distributes, we read, various talents among men; to some he gives five talents, to others two, and to others one: but it is expected, we find, that, notwithstanding this inequality, each should employ the talent that is given to the best advantage; and he who received five talents was under the same obligation of improving them, as he who had received only one; and would, if he had hid his talents in the earth, have been punished in proportion to the abuse. Every man, even in the highest station, may find a proper employment, both for his time and fortune, if he please: and he may assure himself that God, by placing him in that station, never meant to exempt him from the common obligations of society, and give him a licence to spend his life in ease and pleasure. God meant, assuredly, that he should bear

his part in the general commerce of life; that he should consider himself not as an individual, but as a member of the community, the interests of which he is bound to support with all his power; and that his elevated station gives him no other preeminence than that of being more extensively useful.

Having thus seen that we have all some station in life to support, some particular duties to discharge, let us now see in what manner we ought to discharge them.

We have an easy rule given us in Scripture on this head, that all our duties in this life should be performed "as to the Lord, and not unto man;" that is, we should consider our stations in life as trusts reposed in us by our Maker, and as such should discharge the duties of them. What though no worldly trust be reposed? What though we are accountable to nobody upon earth? Can we, therefore, suppose ourselves in reality less accountable? Can we suppose that God, for no reason that we can divine, has singled us out, and given us a large proportion of the things of this world (while others around us are in need), for no other purpose than to squander it away upon our-

selves? To God, undoubtedly, we are accountable for every blessing we enjoy. What mean, in Scripture, the talents given, and the use assigned, but the conscientious discharge of the duties of life, according to the advantages with which they are attended?

It matters not whether these advantages be an inheritance or an acquisition: still they are the gift of God. Agreeably to their rank in life, it is true, all men should live: human distinctions require it; and in doing this properly every one around us will be benefited. Utility should be considered in all our expenses; even the very amusements of a man of fortune should be founded on it.

In short, it is the constant injunction of Scripture, in whatever station we are placed, to consider ourselves as God's servants, and as acting immediately under his eye, not expecting our reward among men, but from our great Master who is in Heaven. This sanctifies, in a manner, all our actions: it places the little difficulties of our station in the light of God's appointments, and turns the most common duties of life into acts of religion.

LECTURE XIII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

The sacrament of baptism is now considered; in which, if we consider the inward grace, we shall see how aptly the sign represents it. The inward grace, or thing signified, we are told, is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;" by which is meant that great renovation of nature, that purity of heart, which the Christian religion is intended to produce. And surely there cannot be a more significant sign of this than water, on account of its cleansing nature. As water refreshes the body, and purifies it from all contracted filth, it aptly represents that renovation of nature which cleanses the soul from the impurities of sin.

It is next asked, what is required of those who are baptised? To this we answer, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament."

The primitive church was extremely strict on this head. In those times, before Christianity was established, when adults offered themselves for baptism, no one was admitted until he had given a very satisfactory evidence of his repentance; and till on good grounds he could profess his faith in Christ: and it was afterwards expected from him that he should prove his faith and repentance by a regular obedience during the future part of his life.

If faith and repentance are expected at baptism, it is a very natural question, Why then are infants baptized, when, by reason of their tender age, they can give no evidence of either?

Whether infants should be admitted to baptism, or whether that sacrament should be deferred till years of discretion, is a question in the Christian church which hath been agitated with some animosity. Our church by no means looks upon baptism as necessary to the infant's salvation*. No

* The Catechism asserts the sacraments to be only *generally* necessary to salvation, excepting particular cases. Where the use of them is intentionally rejected, it is certainly criminal.

man acquainted with the spirit of christianity can conceive that God will leave the salvation of so many innocent souls in the hands of others. But the practice is considered as founded upon the usage of the earliest times: and the church, observing that circumcision was the introductory rite to the Jewish covenant, and that baptism was intended to succeed circumcision, it naturally supposes that baptism should be administered to infants, as circumcision was. The church, however, in this case, hath provided sponsors, who make a profession of obedience in the child's name.

LECTURE XIV.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The first question is an inquiry into the original of the institution: "Why was the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained."

It was ordained, we are informed, "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

In examining a sacrament in general, we have already seen that both baptism and the Lord's Supper were originally instituted as the "means of receiving the grace of God, and as pledges to assure us thereof."

But besides these primary ends, they have each a secondary one, in representing the two most important truths of religion, which gives them more force and influence. Baptism, we have seen, represents that renovation of our sinful nature which the Gospel was intended to introduce: and the peculiar end which the Lord's Supper had in view was the sacrifice of the death of Christ, with all the benefits which arise from it, the remission of our sins, and the reconciliation of the world to God: "This do," said our Saviour, "in remembrance of me."

The outward part, or sign of the Lord's Supper, is "bread and wine;" the things signified are the "body and blood of Christ." In examining the sacrament of baptism, I endeavoured to show how very apt a symbol water is in that ceremony. Bread and wine also are symbols equally apt in representing the body and blood of Christ. There is a difficulty in this part of the Catechism

which should not be passed over: we are told, that "the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." This expression sounds very like the popish doctrine; the true sense of the words undoubtedly is, that the faithful believer only verily and indeed receives the benefit of the sacrament.

It is next asked, What benefits we receive from the Lord's Supper? To which it is answered, "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine." As our bodies are strengthened and refreshed, in a natural way, by bread and wine, so should our souls be, in a spiritual way, by a devout commemoration of the passion of Christ. By gratefully remembering what he suffered for us, we should be excited to a greater abhorrence of sin, which was the cause of his sufferings.

It is lastly asked, "What is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper?" To which we answer, "That we should examine ourselves, whether we repent us truly of our former sins, steadfastly purposing to

lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and to be in charity with all men."

That pious frame of mind is here, in very few words, pointed out, which a Christian ought to cherish and cultivate in himself at all times, but especially upon the performance of any solemn act of religion. Very little, indeed, is said in Scripture of any particular frame of mind which should accompany the performance of this duty; but it may easily be inferred from the nature of the duty itself.

In the first place, "we should repent us truly of our former sins; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life." He who performs a religious exercise, without being earnest in this point, adds only a pharisaical hypocrisy to his other sins. Unless he seriously resolve to lead a good life, he had better refrain, and not pretend, by receiving the sacrament, to a piety which he does not feel.

These "steadfast purposes of leading a new life" form a very becoming exercise to Christians. The lives even of the best of

men afford only a mortifying retrospect. Though they may have conquered some of their worst propensities, yet the triumphs of sin over them, at the various periods of their lives, will always be remembered with sorrow; and may always be remembered with advantage, keeping them on their guard for the future, and strengthening them more and more in all their good resolutions of obedience.

To our repentance and resolutions of obedience we are required to add "a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death." We should impress ourselves with the deepest sense of humility, totally rejecting every idea of our own merit, hoping for God's favour only through the merits of our great Redeemer, and with hearts full of gratitude, trusting only to his all sufficient sacrifice.

Lastly, we are required, at the celebration of this great rite, to be "in charity with all men."

It commemorates the greatest instance of love that can be conceived; and should, therefore, raise in us correspondent affections. It should excite in us that constant

flow of benevolence, in which the spirit of religion consists; and without which, indeed, we can have no religion at all. Love is the very distinguishing badge of Christianity: "By this," said our great Master, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

One species of charity should, at this time, never be forgotten, and that is the forgiveness of others. No acceptable gift can be offered at this altar but in the spirit of reconciliation.

Let us receive these sacraments, for the gracious purposes for which our Lord enjoined them, with gratitude and with reverence. But let us not lay a greater stress upon them than our Lord intended. Heaven, we doubt not, may be gained when there have been the means of receiving neither the one sacrament nor the other. But unless our affections are right, and our lives answerable to them, we can never please God, though we perform the externals of religion with ever so much exactness. We may err in our notions about the sacraments; the world has long been divided on these subjects; and a gracious

God, it may be hoped, will pardon our errors. But to matters of practice we have no apology for error. The great lines of our duty are drawn so strong, that a deviation here is not error, but guilt.

Let us then, to conclude from the whole, make it our principal care to purify our hearts in the sight of God. Let us beseech him to increase the influence of his Holy Spirit within us, that our faith may be of that kind "which worketh by love;" that all our affections, and from them our actions, may flow in a steady course of obedience; that each day may correct the last, by a sincere repentance of our mistakes in life; and that we may continue gradually to approach nearer the idea of Christian perfection. Let us do this, disclaiming, after all, any merits of our own, and not trusting in outward observances, but trusting in the merits of Christ to make up our deficiences, and we need not fear our acceptance with God.

LECTURE XV.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

The full meaning of this admirable prayer, and of the several petitions contained in it, may perhaps be not improperly expressed in the following manner:

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

O thou great Parent of the universe, our Creator, our Preserver, and continual Benefactor, grant that we, and all reasonable creatures, may entertain just and worthy notions of thy nature and attributes, may fear thy power, admire thy wisdom, adore thy goodness, rely upon thy truth; may reverence thy holy name, may bless and praise thee, may worship and obey thee.

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Grant that all the nations of the earth may come to the knowledge and belief of thy holy religion; that it may every where produce the blessed fruits of piety, righteous-

ness, charity, and sobriety; that by a constant endeavour to obey thy holy laws we may approach, as near as the infirmity of our nature will allow, to the more perfect obedience of the angels that are in heaven, and thus prepare ourselves for entering into thy kingdom of glory hereafter.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

Feed us, we beseech thee, with food convenient for us. We ask not for riches and honours, give us only what is necessary for our comfortable subsistence in the several stations which thy providence has allotted to us; and, above all, give us contented minds.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

We are all, O Lord, the very best of us, miserable sinners. Be not extreme, we beseech thee, to mark what we have done amiss, but pity our infirmities, and pardon our offences. Yet let us not dare to implore forgiveness from thee, unless we also from our hearts forgive our offending brethren.

"Lead us not into temptation."

We are surrounded on every side with temptations to sin; and such is the corruption and frailty of our nature, that, without

thy powerful succour, we cannot always stand upright. Take us, then, O gracious God, under thy almighty protection, and amidst all the dangers and difficulties of our Christian warfare be thou our refuge and support. Suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but send thy Holy Spirit to strengthen our own weak endeavours, and enable us to escape, or to subdue, all the enemies of our salvation.

"But deliver us from evil."

Preserve us also, if it be thy blessed will, not only from spiritual but from temporal evil. Keep us ever by thy watchful providence, both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that, thou being in all cases our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal as finally to lose not the things eternal.

Hear us, O Lord our governor, from heaven, thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest, have regard to our petitions. They are offered up to thee in the fullest confidence that thy goodness will dispose, and thy power enable thee to grant, whatever thy wisdom sees to be convenient for us, and conducive to our final happiness.

LECTURE XVI.

BAD COMPANY.

"Evil communication corrupts good manners." This assertion is general, and no doubt all people suffer from such communication; but, above all, the minds of youth will suffer, which are yet unformed, unprincipled, unfurnished, and ready to receive any impression.

But before we consider the danger of keeping bad company, let us first see the meaning of the phrase.

In the phrase of the world, good company means fashionable people. Their stations in life, not their morals, are considered: and he who associates with such, though they set him the example of breaking every commandment of the decalogue, is still said to keep good company. I should wish you to fix another meaning to the expression; and to consider vice in the same detestable light in whatever company it is found; nay,

to consider all company in which it is found, be their station what it will, as bad company.

The three following classes will perhaps include the greatest part of those who deserve this appellation.

In the first, I should rank all who endeavour to destroy the principles of Christianity, who jest upon Scripture, talk blasphemy, and treat revelation with contempt.

A second class of bad company, are those who have a tendency to destroy in us the principles of common honesty and integrity. Under this head we may rank gamesters of every denomination, and the low and infamous characters of every profession.

A third class of bad company, and such as are most dangerous to youth, includes the whole catalogue of men of pleasure. In whatever way they follow the call of appetite, they have equally a tendency to corrupt the purity of the mind.

Besides these three classes, whom we may call bad company, there are others who come under the denomination of ill chosen company; trifling, insipid characters of every kind, who follow no business,

are led by no ideas of improvement, but spend their time in dissipation and folly, whose highest praise it is that they are only not vicious. With none of these a serious man would wish his son to keep company.

It may be asked, what is meant by keeping bad company? The world abounds with characters of this kind: they meet us in every place; and if we keep company at all, it is impossible to avoid keeping company with such persons.

It is true, if we were determined never to have any commerce with bad men, we must, as the apostle remarks, "altogether go out of the world." By keeping bad company, therefore, is not meant a casual intercourse with them, on occasion of business, or as they accidentally fall in our way; but having an inclination to consort with them, complying with that inclination, seeking their company when we might avoid it, entering into their parties, and making them the companions of our choice. Mixing with them occasionally cannot be avoided.

The danger of keeping bad company arises, principally, from our aptness to imitate and catch the manners and sentiments

of others; from the power of custom; from our own bad inclinations, and from the pains taken by the bad to corrupt us.

In our earliest youth the contagion of manners is observable. In the boy yet incapable of having any thing instilled into him, we easily discover from his first actions, and rude attempts at language, the kind of persons with whom he has been brought up.

As he enters farther into life his behaviour, manners, and conversation all take their cast from the company he keeps. Observe the peasant and the man of education; the difference is striking. And yet God hath bestowed equal talents on each. The only difference is, they have been thrown into different scenes of life, and have had commerce with persons of different stations.

Nor are manners and behaviour more easily caught than opinions and principles. In childhood and youth we naturally adopt the sentiments of those about us. And as we advance in life, how few of us think for ourselves? How many of us are satisfied with taking our opinions at secondhand!

The great power and force of custom form another argument against keeping

bad company. However seriously disposed we may be, and however shocked at the first approaches of vice, this shocking appearance goes off upon an intimacy with it. Custom will soon render the most disgustful thing familiar. And this is, indeed, a kind provision of nature to render labour and toil and danger, which are the lot of man, more easy to him. The raw soldier, who trembles at the first encounter, becomes a hardy veteran in a few campaigns. Habit renders danger familiar, and of course indifferent to him.

But habit, which is intended for our good, may, like other kind appointments of nature, be converted into a mischief. The well disposed youth, entering first into bad company, is shocked at what he hears and what he sees. The good principles which he had imbibed ring in his ears an alarming lesson against the wickedness of his companions. But, alas! this sensibility is but of a day's continuance. The next jovial meeting makes the horrid picture of yesterday more easily endured. Virtue is soon thought a severe rule; the Gospel an inconvenient restraint: a few pangs of conscience now

and then interrupt his pleasures, and whisper to him that he once had better thoughts; but even these by degrees die away; and he who at first was shocked even at the appearance of vice, is formed by custom into a profligate leader of vicious pleasures, perhaps into an abandoned tempter to vice. So carefully should we oppose the first approaches of sin! so vigilant should we be against so insidious an enemy!

Our own bad inclinations form another argument against bad company. We have so many passions and appetites to govern; so many bad propensities of different kinds to watch; that, amidst such a variety of enemies within, we ought at least to be on our guard against those without. The breast even of a good man, is represented in Scripture, and experienced in fact, to be in a state of warfare. His vicious inclinations are continually drawing him one way, while his virtue is making efforts another. And if the Scriptures represent this as the case even of a good man, whose passions, it may be imagined, are become in some degree cool and temperate, and who has made some progress in a virtuous course, what

may we suppose to be the danger of an unexperienced youth, whose passions and appetites are violent and seducing, and whose mind is in a still less confirmed state? It is his part surely to keep out of the way of temptation, and to give his bad inclinations as little room as possible to acquire new strength.

LECTURE XVII.

RIDICULE ONE OF THE CHIEF ARTS OF CORRUPTION.

These arguments against keeping bad company will still receive additional strength, if we consider farther, the great pains taken by the bad to corrupt others. It is a very true but lamentable fact in the history of human nature, that bad men take more pains to corrupt their own species, than virtuous men do to reform them. Hence those specious arts, that show of friendship, that appearance of disinterestedness, with which the profligate seducer endeavours to lure the unwary youth, and at the same

time yielding to his inclinations, seems to follow rather than to lead him. Many are the arts of these corrupters; but their principal art is ridicule. By this they endeavour to laugh out of countenance all the better principles of their wavering proselyte, and make him think contemptibly of those whom he formerly respected; by this they stifle the ingenuous blush, and finally destroy all sense of shame. Their cause is below argument. They aim not, therefore, at reasoning. Raillery is the weapon they employ; and who is there that hath the steadiness to hear persons and things, whatever reverence he may have had for them, the subject of continual ridicule, without losing that reverence by degrees?

Having thus considered what principally makes bad company dangerous, I shall just add, that even were your morals in no danger from such intercourse, your characters would infallibly suffer. The world will always judge of you by your companions: and nobody will suppose that a youth of virtuous principles himself can possibly form a connection with a profligate.

In reply to the danger supposed to arise

from bad company, perhaps the youth may say he is so firm in his own opinions that he thinks himself secure, and need not restrain himself from the most unreserved conversation.

Alas! this security is the very brink of the precipice: nor hath vice in her whole train a more dangerous enemy to you than presumption. Caution, ever awake to danger, is a guard against it. But security lays every guard asleep. "Let him who thinketh he standeth," saith the apostle, "take heed lest he fall." Even an apostle himself did fall, by thinking that he stood secure. "Though I should die with thee," said St. Peter to his Master, "yet will I not deny thee." That very night, notwithstanding this boasted security, he repeated the crime three several times. And can we suppose that presumption, which occasioned an apostle's fall, shall not ruin an unexperienced youth? The story is recorded for our instruction; and should be a standing lesson against presuming upon our own strength.

In conclusion, such as the dangers are which arise from bad company, such are the

advantages which accrue from good. We imitate and catch the manners and sentiments of good men as we do of bad. Custom, which renders vice less a deformity, renders virtue more lovely. Good examples have a force beyond instruction, and warm us into emulation beyond precept; while the countenance and conversation of virtuous men encourage and draw out into action every kindred disposition of our hearts.

Besides, as a sense of shame often prevents our doing a right thing in bad company, it operates in the same way in preventing our doing a wrong one in good. Our character becomes a pledge; and we cannot, without a kind of dishonour, draw back.

It is not possible, indeed, for a youth, yet unfurnished with knowledge (which fits him for good company), to choose his companions as he pleases. A youth must have something peculiarly attractive to qualify him for the society of men of established reputation. What he has to do is, at all events, to avoid bad company; and to endeavour, by improving his mind and morals, to qualify himself for the best.

Happy is that youth who, upon his entrance into the world, can choose his company with discretion. There is often in vice a gaiety, an unreserve, a freedom of manners, which are apt, at first sight, to engage the unwary: while virtue, on the other hand, is often modest, reserved, diffident, backward, and easily disconcerted. That freedom of manners, however engaging, may cover a very corrupt heart: and this awkwardness, however unpleasing, may veil a thousand virtues. Suffer not your mind, therefore, to be easily either engaged or disgusted at first sight. Form your intimacies with reserve; and if drawn unawares into an acquaintance you disapprove, immediately retreat. Open not your hearts to every profession of friendship. They whose friendship is worth accepting are, as you ought to be, reserved in offering it. Choose your companions not merely for the sake of a few outward accomplishments, for the idle pleasure of spending an agreeable hour; but mark their disposition to virtue or vice, and, as much as possible, choose those for your companions whom you see others respect: always remembering, that

upon the choice of your company depends, in a great measure, the success of all you have learned, the hopes of your friends, your future characters in life, and, what you ought above all things to value, the purity of your hearts.

LECTURE XVIII.

RELIGION THE BEST AND ONLY SUPPORT IN CASES OF REAL STRESS.

There are no principles but those of religion to be depended on in case of real stress; and these are able to encounter the worst emergencies, and to bear up under all the changes and chances to which our life is subject.

Consider, then, what virtue the very first principle of religion has, and how wonderfully it is conducive to this end: That there is a God, a powerful, a wise, and good being, who first made the world, and continues to govern it; by whose goodness all things are designed, and by whose providence all things

are conducted to bring about the greatest and best ends. The sorrowful and pensive wretch that was giving way to his misfortunes, and mournfully sinking under them, the moment this doctrine comes in to his aid hushes all his complaints, and thus speaks comfort to his soul, " It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Without his direction I know that no evil can befall me, without his permission that no power can hurt me; it is impossible a Being so wise should mistake my happiness, or that a Being so good should contradict it. If he has denied me riches, or other advantages, perhaps he foresees the gratifying my wishes would undo me, and by my own abuse of them be perverted to my ruin. If he has denied me the request of children, or in his providence thought fit to take them from me, how can I say whether he has not dealt kindly with me, and only taken that away which he foresaw would embitter and shorten my days? It does so to thousands, where the disobedience of a thankless child has brought down the parents' gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Has he visited me with sickness, poverty, or other disappointments, can I say

but these are blessings in disguise? so many different expressions of his care and concern to disentangle my thoughts from this world, and fix them upon another—another, a better world beyond this! This thought opens a new face of hope and consolation to the unfortunate; and as the persuasion of a providence reconciles him to the evils he has suffered, this prospect of a future life gives him strength to despise them, and esteem the light afflictions of this life, as they are, not worthy to be compared to what is reserved for him hereafter.

Things are great or small by comparison; and he who looks no farther than this world, and balances the account of his joys and sufferings from that consideration, finds all his sorrows enlarged, and at the close of them will be apt to look back and cast the same sad reflection upon the whole which the patriarch did to Pharaoh, "That few and evil had been the days of his pilgrimage." But let him lift up his eyes towards heaven, and steadfastly behold the life and immortality of a future state, he then wipes away all tears from off his eyes for ever; like the exiled captive, big with the hopes that he is

returning home, he feels not the weight of his chains, or counts the days of his captivity, but looks forward with rapture towards the country where his heart is fled before.

These are the aids which religion offers us towards the regulation of our spirit under the evils of life: but, like great cordials, they are seldom used but on great occurrences. In the lesser evils of life we seem to stand unguarded, and our peace and contentment are overthrown, and our happiness broken in upon, by a little impatience of spirit under the cross and untoward accidents we meet with. These stand unprovided for, and we neglect them as we do the slighter indispositions of the body, which we think not worth treating seriously, and so leave them to nature. In good habits of the body this may do; and I would gladly believe there are such good habits of the temper, such a complexional ease and health of heart, as may often save the patient much medicine. We are still to consider, that however such good frames of mind are got, they are worth preserving by all rules. Patience and contentment, which, like the treasure hid in the field, for which a man sold all

he had, to purchase, is of that price that it cannot be had at too great a cost; since without it, the best condition of life cannot make us happy; and with it, it is impossible we should be miserable, even in the worst.

LECTURE XIX.

EXTRACT OF A DISCOURSE ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAMENTABLE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE.

BY THE BISHOP OF CHESTER.

One of the first and surest foundations of every good principle and habit, is a constant sense of the superintending providence of the Almighty. This sentiment or feeling lies at the root of all religion. It should therefore be the medium through which every incident is viewed; should be mixed with, and pervade, all our thoughts and prayers. Thus shall we learn to see the Deity in every thing, and seeing, must adore the wisdom and benevolence of all his works.

Instances, therefore, of adversity, of affliction, or death, as they tend peculiarly to generate this christian frame of mind, can never be contemplated without their use. They awaken us from that fatal slumber into which ease and affluence are too apt to lull us: they bring us to a sense of our duty, they better prepare us to meet our Lord and our Redeemer.

Sorrow is the nurse of wisdom. Every pious meditation, and every good disposition, are cherished and matured in the house of mourning. It is there we are taught to feel that we are men and brethren: it is there we learn to commune with ourselves, and to retire within: it is there that we throw off the debasing clogs of mortality, and more sensibly aspire unto those blessed regions where peace and happiness for ever dwell.

The contemplation of death, also, cannot but impress us with a conviction of the uncertain and perishable nature of all things here below; cannot but remind us of that land of darkness to which we are all so evidently tending. Pass but a few years more, and this assembled crowd will be,

every one of them, consigned to the grave, out of sight, and out of remembrance. The sun, indeed, will rise and set, but not to us. The tides will ebb and flow, the laws of nature will have their course, the earth will still give her increase, and the business of the world go on; but we shall be removed from this scene, shall have no share in what is passing.

Such meditations naturally tend to fill the mind with a sense of our entire dependance upon God. There is nothing in reality so near and essential to us, and yet there is nothing for the most part so distant from our perceptions, as the Deity. He is about our path and about our bed, in every breath we breathe, in every thought we think; and yet for this very reason, and because he ought to be every thing, he too often becomes nothing to us—unseen, or disregarded. But in the season of adversity, when all other helps have failed, we then perceive the necessity of fleeing unto God. His providential care becomes first the object of faith, then of hope, and lastly of consolation.

These should be the feelings of every

pious mind under all the trials and vicissitudes of life. He who makes affliction or death productive of their proper effects, will see in the arm of God a power overruling all things, and which can preserve him amidst all adversities. He becomes satisfied that the views of the Deity never ultimately terminate in misery, but that good is constantly educed out of evil.

The vanity of all earthly greatness, the uncertainty and transitoriness of every terrestrial enjoyment, can in no other instance be so convincingly brought home to our minds and feelings. Who now can trust in any thing of this world? Who now can build his hopes upon the morrow? Who but must perceive that youth, and health, and riches are not, for an instant, to be depended on? That the paths of grandeur lead but to the grave. For what event could be farther from all expectation than that which has placed in the silent tomb the parent and her child? If human efforts, if human prayers, could have averted the dart of death, we had not now been lamenting together over the common failure of our fondest wishes. The first lesson, therefore,

which this appalling dispensation should suggest, is a full conviction of our own helplessness, and a sense of our dependance upon God. We here behold the precariousness of the tenure of life, and the fleetingness of our abode upon earth. So powerful is the hold which pleasure gains on our affections, so devoted our attachment to the interests and concerns of the world, that we see the young and strong borne to their tombs, we hear the last knell of departed life without at all laying these things to heart, without holding ourselves more prepared to meet our God. But the recent calamitous affliction, by which a nation has been visited, forces reflection upon all; compels the most unthinking to consider their latter end.

While, however, we thus behold the sovereignty of the Godhead, and perceive the weakness of our common nature, we should, at the same time, neither murmur nor despair. Every thing is ordained or permitted by God for our ultimate happiness or improvement. Little as we do see into the plans of Providence, and unable as we are to penetrate far into the veil of human events, yet do we see enough to

convince us that God never willingly, or but for their own good, punisheth the sons of men. Though the fate and issue of things be wisely hid in the womb of time, yet have we the sure word of Scripture and experience for believing, that the lot will at length fall into the lap of the righteous. We grieve not, then, as they without hope. Though troubled, we are not forsaken; though cast down, we are not destroyed. Let us but act our parts well, and we may leave the ulterior disposal of every thing unto the Lord. The history of ages has demonstrated that the prosperity of empires and individuals is for the most part proportionate to their virtue. Instead, therefore, of repining at any of the dispensations of the Almighty, much more instead of doubting that God is just and gracious, let us rather proceed with renewed confidence to the discharge of our respective duties, well knowing that our Redeemer liveth; and that he, without whose permission not even a sparrow falleth to the ground, will never forsake the children who deserve his care. Thus believing and acting, whether we live or die, we shall live or die unto the Lord:

and thus, as at present, under this most mysterious visitation, we shall still trust in the God of our salvation, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, but blessed be the name of the Lord."

We see, in the second place, from that genuine expression of grief which has so generally manifested itself, the influence and the weight of moral worth and character in every situation and circumstance of life. She of whom we have been deprived had laid aside for a time the splendours of royalty, and was exemplifying the private virtues of a domestic station. By the culture and improvement of these she was qualifying herself for that exalted office which she would, as we fondly expected, one day (though late, we hoped) be called upon to discharge. In the shade of retirement, by the exercise of benevolence, a benevolence the extent of which the tears of her neighbours have evinced, she was preparing herself for those high destinies to which both her birth and merit appeared to be leading her. In consequence she was becoming daily more and more a nation's pride: and we vainly flattered ourselves with thinking that the happi-

ness which England had enjoyed, and the glories which it had achieved under female reigns, would all again have been displayed under hers. But what are the hopes of man! She is gone! Our wishes and expectations are shrouded with her in the grave. Still, however, though dead, she speaketh. That consolation which she experienced herself, upon learning the death of her infant, must, from the same hallowed source, be sought for and found by us. If we really loved her when living, if we really mourn for her when dead, let these her words be for ever embalmed in our memories, "It is the will of God."

LECTURE XX.

THE INFORMATION THE GOSPEL GIVES MOST DESIRABLE.

THE Christian revelation has such pretences, at least, as may make it worthy of a particular consideration: it pretends to come from heaven; to have been confirmed by undeniable miracles and prophecies; to have

been ratified by the blood of Christ and his apostles, who died in asserting its truth; its doctrines are pure and holy, its precepts just and righteous; its worship is a reasonable service, refined from the errors of idolatry and superstition, and spiritual like the God who is the object of it: it offers the aid and assistance of heaven to the weakness of nature, which makes the religion of the Gospel to be as practicable as it is reasonable; it promises infinite rewards to obedience, and threatens eternal punishment to obstinate offenders, which makes it of the utmost consequence to us soberly to consider it, since every one who rejects it stakes his own soul against the truth of it.

Look into the Gospel, there you will find every reasonable hope of nature cleared up and confirmed, every difficulty answered and removed. Do the present circumstances of the world lead you to suspect that God could never be the author of such corrupt and wretched creatures as men now are? Your suspicions are just and well founded, "God made man upright;" but through the temptation of the devil sin entered, and death and destruction followed after.

Do you suspect, from the success of virtue and vice in this world, that the providence of God does not interpose to protect the righteous from violence, or to punish the wicked? The suspicion is not without ground. God leaves his best servants here to be tried oftentimes with affliction and sorrow, and permits the wicked to flourish and abound. The call of the Gospel is not to honour and riches here, but to take up our cross and follow Christ.

Do you judge, from comparing the present state of the world with the natural notion you have of God, and of his justice and goodness, that there must needs be another state in which justice shall take place? You reason right; and the Gospel confirms the judgment. God has appointed a day to judge the world in righteousness; then those who mourn shall rejoice, those who weep shall laugh, and the persecuted and afflicted servants of God shall be heirs of his kingdom.

Have you sometimes misgivings of mind? Are you tempted to mistrust this judgment when you see the difficulties which surround it on every side; some which affect the

soul in its separate state, some which affect the body in its state of corruption and dissolution? Look to the Gospel: there these difficulties are accounted for, and you need no longer puzzle yourself with dark questions concerning the state, condition, and nature of separate spirits, or concerning the body, however to appearance lost and destroyed; for the body and soul shall once more meet, to part no more, but to be happy for ever. In this case the learned cannot doubt, and the ignorant may be sure, that it is the man, the very man himself, who shall rise again: for a union of the same soul and body is as certainly the restoration of the man, as the dividing them was the destruction.

Would you know who it is that gives this assurance? It is one who is able to make good his word: one who loved you so well as to die for you: yet one too great to be held a prisoner in the grave. No; he rose with triumph and glory, the first born from the dead, and will, in like manner, call from the dust of the earth all those who put their trust and confidence in him.

But who is this, you will say, who was

subject to death, and yet had power over death? How could so much weakness and so much strength meet together? That God has the power of life, we know; but then he cannot die: that man is mortal, we know; but then he cannot give life.

Consider; does this difficulty deserve an answer, or does it not? Our blessed Saviour lived among us in a low and poor condition, exposed to much ill treatment from his jealous countrymen: when he fell into their power, their rage knew no bounds; they reviled him, insulted him, mocked him, scourged him, and at last nailed him to a cross; where, by a shameful and wretched death, he finished a life of sorrow and affliction. Did we know no more of him than this, upon what ground could we pretend to hope that he will be able to save us from the power of death? We might say with the disciples, "We trusted this had been he who should have saved Israel;" but he is dead, he is gone, and all our hopes are buried in his grave.

If you think this ought to be answered, and that the faith of a Christian cannot be a reasonable faith, unless it be able to ac-

count for this seeming contradiction; I beseech you then never more complain of the Gospel for furnishing an answer to this great objection, for removing this stumbling block out of the way of our faith. He was a man, and therefore he died: he was the Son of God, and therefore he rose from the dead, and will give life to all his true disciples. He it was who formed this world, and all things in it, and for the sake of man was content to become man, and to taste death for all, that all through him may live. This is a wonderful piece of knowledge, which God has revealed to us in his Gospel; but he has not revealed it to raise our wonder, but to confirm and establish our faith in him to whom he hath committed all power, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

Had the Gospel required of us to expect from Christ the redemption of our souls and bodies, and given us no reason to think that Christ was endowed with power equal to the work, we might justly have complained; and it would have been a standing reproach, that Christians believe they know not what. But to expect redemption from the Son of God, the resurrection of our bodies from the

same hand which at first created and formed them, are rational and well founded acts of faith; and it is the Christian's glory, that he knows in whom he has believed.

That the world was made by the Son of God, is a proposition with which reason has no fault to find: that he who made the world should have power to renew it to life again, is highly consonant to reason. All the mystery lies in this, that so high and great a person should condescend to become man, and subject to death, for the sake of mankind.

But are we fit persons to complain of this transcendent mysterious love? or does it become us to quarrel with the kindness of our blessed Lord towards us, only because it is greater than we can conceive? No; it becomes us to bless and adore this exceeding love, by which we are saved from condemnation, by which we expect to be rescued from death; knowing that the power of our blessed Lord is equal to his love, and that he is "able to subdue all things to himself."

LECTURE XXI.

OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPRESENCE OF THE DEITY, TOGETHER WITH THE IMMENSITY OF HIS WORKS.

I was yesterday, about sun set, walking in the open fields, till the night insensibly fell upon me. I at first amused myself with all the richness and variety of colours which appeared in the western part of heaven; in proportion as they faded away and went out, several stars and planets appeared one after another, till the whole firmament was in a glow. The blueness of the æther was exceedingly heightened and enlivened by the season of the year, and the rays of all those luminaries that passed through it. The galaxy appeared in its most beautiful white. To complete the scene, the full moon rose at length in that clouded majesty which Milton takes notice of, and opened to the eye a new picture of nature, which was more finely shaded, and disposed among

softer lights, than that which the sun had before discovered to us.

As I was surveying the moon walking in her brightness, and taking her progress among the constellations, a thought arose in me, which I believe very often perplexes and disturbs men of serious and contemplative natures. David himself fell into it in that reflection, "When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou regardest him?" In the same manner, when I consider that infinite host of stars, or, to speak more philosophically, of suns, which were then shining upon me, with those innumerable sets of planets or worlds which were moving round their respective suns; when I still enlarged the idea, and supposed another heaven of suns and worlds rising still above this which we discovered, and these still enlightened by a superior firmament of luminaries, which are planted at so great a distance that they may appear to the inhabitants of the former as the stars do to us; in short, while I pursued this thought, I could not but reflect on

that little insignificant figure which I myself bore amidst the immensity of God's works.

I could not but look upon myself with secret horror, as a being that was not worth the smallest regard of one who had so great a work under his care and superintendency. I was afraid of being overlooked amidst the immensity of nature, and lost among that infinite variety of creatures which, in all probability, swarm through all these immeasurable regions of matter.

We shall utterly extinguish this melancholy thought, of our being overlooked by our Maker in the multiplicity of his works, and the infinity of those objects among which he seems to be incessantly employed, if we consider, in the first place, that he is omnipresent; and in the second, that he is omniscient.

If we consider him in his omnipresence, his being passes through, actuates, and supports the whole frame of nature. His creation, and every part of it, is full of him. There is nothing he has made that is either so distant, so little, or so inconsiderable, which he does not essentially inhabit. His substance is within the substance of every

being, whether material or immaterial, and as intimately present to it as that being is to itself. It would be an imperfection in him were he able to move out of one place into another, or to draw himself from any thing he has created, or from any part of that space which he diffused and spread abroad to infinity. In short, to speak of him in the language of the old philosophers, he is a being whose centre is every where, and his circumference no where.

In the second place, he is omniscient, as well as omnipresent. His omniscience indeed necessarily and naturally flows from his omnipresence. He cannot but be conscious of every motion that arises in the whole material world, which he thus essentially pervades, and of every thought that is stirring in the intellectual world, to every part of which he is thus intimately united.

Were the soul separate from the body, and with one glance of thought should start beyond the bounds of the creation, should it for millions of years continue its progress through infinite space with the same activity, it would still find itself within the embrace of its Creator, and encompassed round with

the immensity of the Godhead. While we are in the body he is not less present with us, because he is concealed from us. "Oh that I knew where I might find him! (says Job). Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." In short, reason as well as revelation, assures us that he cannot be absent from us, notwithstanding he is undiscovered by us.

In this consideration of God Almighty's omnipresence and omniscience, every uncomfortable thought vanishes. He cannot but regard every thing that has being, especially such of his creatures who fear they are not regarded by him. He is privy to all their thoughts, and to that anxiety of heart in particular which is apt to trouble them on this occasion; for, as it is impossible he should overlook any of his creatures, so we may be confident that he regards, with an eye of mercy, those who endeavour to recommend themselves to his notice, and in unfeigned humility of heart think themselves unworthy that he should be mindful of them.

LECTURE XXII.

MOTIVES TO PIETY AND VIRTUE, DRAWN FROM THE OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPRESENCE OF THE DEITY.

In one of your late papers you had occasion to consider the ubiquity of the Godhead, and at the same time to show, that as he is present to every thing, he cannot but be attentive to every thing, and privy to all the modes and parts of its existence: or in other words, that his omniscience and omnipresence are co-existent, and run together through the whole infinitude of space. This consideration might furnish us with many incentives to devotion and motives to morality; but as this subject has been handled by several excellent writers, I shall consider it in a light in which I have not seen it placed by others.

First. How disconsolate is the condition of an intellectual being who is thus present with his Maker, but at the same time re-

ceives no extraordinary benefit or advantage from this his presence!

Secondly. How deplorable is the condition of an intellectual being who feels no other effects from this his presence but such as proceed from divine wrath and indignation.

Thirdly. How happy is the condition of that intellectual being who is sensible of his Maker's presence from the secret effects of his mercy and loving kindness!

First. How disconsolate is the condition of an intellectual being who is thus present with his Maker, but at the same time receives no extraordinary benefit or advantage from this his presence! Every particle of matter is actuated by this Almighty Being who passes through it. The heavens and the earth, the stars and the planets, move and gravitate by virtue of this great principle within them. All the dead parts of nature are invigorated by the presence of their Creator, and made capable of exerting their respective qualities. The several instincts in the brute creation do likewise operate and work towards the several ends which

are agreeable to them, by this divine energy. Man only, who does not cooperate with his Holy Spirit, and is inattentive to his presence, receives none of these advantages from it, which are perfective of his nature and necessary to his well being. The divinity is with him, and in him, and every where about him, but of no advantage to him. It is the same thing to a man without religion, as if there were no God in the world. It is indeed impossible for an infinite Being to remove himself from any of his creatures; but though he cannot withdraw his essence from us, which would argue an imperfection in him, he can withdraw from us all the joys and consolations of it. His presence may perhaps be necessary to support us in our existence, but he may leave this our existence to itself, with regard to its happiness or misery. For, in this sense, he may cast us away from his presence, and take his Holy Spirit from us. This single consideration one would think sufficient, to make us open our hearts to all those infusions of joy and gladness which are so near at hand, and ready to be poured in upon us; especially when we consider,

secondly, the deplorable condition of an intellectual being who feels no other effects from his Maker's presence but such as proceed from divine wrath and indignation!

We may assure ourselves that the great Author of nature will not always be as one who is indifferent to any of his creatures. Those who will not feel him in his love will be sure at length to feel him in his displeasure. And how dreadful is the condition of that creature who is only sensible of the being of his Creator by what he suffers from him.

But I shall only consider the wretchedness of an intellectual being who, in this life, lies under the displeasure of him that at all times, and in all places, is intimately united with him. He is able to disquiet the soul, and vex it in all its faculties. He can hinder any of the greatest comforts of life from refreshing us, and give an edge to every one of its slightest calamities. Who then can bear the thought of being an outcast from his presence, that is from the comforts of it, or of feeling it only in its terrors? How pathetic is that expostulation of Job, when for the real trial of his patience he was made

to look upon himself in this deplorable condition! "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am become a burden to myself?" But, thirdly, how happy is the condition of that intellectual being who is sensible of his Maker's presence from the secret effects of his mercy and loving kindness!

The blessed in heaven behold him face to face, that is, are as sensible of his presence as we are of the presence of any person whom we look upon with our eyes. There is doubtless a faculty in spirits by which they apprehend one another, as our senses do material objects; and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified bodies, will by this faculty, in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the divine presence. We, who have this veil of flesh standing between us and the world of spirits, must be content to know the Spirit of God is present with us by the effects which he produceth in us. Our outward senses are too gross to apprehend him; we may, however, taste and see how gracious he is, by his influence upon our minds, by those virtuous

thoughts which he awakens in us, by those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls, and by those ravishing joys and inward satisfactions which are perpetually springing up and diffusing themselves among all the thoughts of good men. He is lodged in our very essence, and is as a soul within the soul, to irritate its understanding, rectify its will, purify its passions, and enliven all the powers of man. How happy therefore is an intellectual being who, by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul! Though the whole creation frowns upon him, and all nature looks black about him, he has his light and support within him, that are able to cheer his mind and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors which encompass him. He knows that his helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing else can be, which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that Being who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, his glory, and the lifter up of his head. In his

deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest of beings; and perceives within himself such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful than any thing that can be met with in the conversation of his creatures. Even in the house of death, he considers the pains of his dissolution to be nothing else but the breaking down of that partition which stands betwixt his soul and the sight of that being who is always present with him, and is about to manifest itself to him in fulness of joy.

If we would be thus happy, and thus sensible of our Maker's presence, from the secret effects of his mercy and goodness, we must keep such a watch over all thoughts, that, in the language of the Scripture, his soul may have pleasure in us. We must take care not to grieve his Holy Spirit, and endeavour to make the meditations of our hearts always acceptable in his sight, that he may delight thus to reside and dwell in us. The light of nature could direct Seneca to this doctrine, in a very remarkable passage among his epistles:—"There is a Holy Spirit residing in us, who watches and observes

both good and evil men, and will treat us after the same manner that we treat him." But I shall conclude this discourse with those more emphatical words in divine revelation:—"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

LECTURE XXIII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME, AND THE PROPER METHODS OF SPENDING IT.

We all of us complain of the shortness of time, saith Seneca, and yet have much more than we know what to do with. Our lives, says he, are spent either in doing nothing at all, or in doing nothing to the purpose, or in doing nothing that we ought to do. We are always complaining our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them.

I often consider mankind as wholly inconsistent with itself, in a point that bears

some affinity to the former. Though we seem grieved at the shortness of life in general, we are wishing every period of it at an end.

If we divide the life of most men into twenty parts, we shall find that at least nineteen of them are mere gaps and chasms, which are neither filled with pleasure nor business. I do not, however, include in this calculation the life of those men who are in a perpetual hurry of affairs, but of those only who are not always engaged in scenes of action; and I hope I shall not do an unacceptable service to these persons, if I point out to them certain methods for the filling up their empty spaces of life. The methods I shall propose to them are as follows:—

The first is the exercise of virtue, in the most general acceptation of the word. That particular scheme which comprehends the social virtues may give employment to the most industrious temper, and find a man business more than the most active station of life. To advise the ignorant, relieve the needy, comfort the afflicted, are duties that fall in our way almost every day of our

lives. A man has frequent opportunities of mitigating the fierceness of a party; of doing justice to the character of a deserving man; of softening the envious, quieting the angry, and rectifying the prejudiced, which are all of them employments suitable to a reasonable nature, and bring great satisfaction to the person who can busy himself in them with discretion.

There is another kind of virtue that may find employment for those retired hours in which we are altogether left to ourselves, and destitute of company and conversation; I mean that intercourse and communication which every reasonable creature ought to maintain with the great Author of his being. The man who lives under an habitual sense of the divine presence, keeps up a perpetual cheerfulness of temper, and enjoys, every moment, the satisfaction of thinking himself in company with his dearest and best of friends. The time never lies heavy upon him; it is impossible for him to be alone. His thoughts and passions are the most busied at such hours when those of other men are the most inactive. He no sooner

steps out of the world, but his heart burns with devotion, swells with hope, and triumphs in the consciousness of that presence which every where surrounds him; or, on the contrary, pours out its fears, its sorrows, its apprehensions, to the great supporter of its existence.

I have here only considered the necessity of a man's being virtuous, that he may have something to do; but if we consider farther, that the exercise of virtue is not only an amusement for the time it lasts, but that its influence extends to those parts of our existence which lie beyond the grave, and that our whole eternity is to take its colour from those hours which we here employ in virtue or in vice, the argument redoubles upon us for putting in practice this method of passing away our time.

When a man has but a little stock to improve, and has opportunities of turning it all to good account, what shall we think of him if he suffers nineteen parts of it to lie dead, and perhaps employs even the twentieth to his ruin or disadvantage? But because the mind cannot be always in its fer-

vours, nor strained up to a pitch of virtue, it is necessary to find out proper employments for it in its relaxations.

The next method, therefore, that I would propose to fill up our time should be useful and innocent diversions. I must confess I think it is below reasonable creatures to be altogether conversant in such diversions as are merely innocent, and have nothing else to recommend them but that there is no hurt in them. Whether any kind of gaming has even thus much to say for itself, I shall not determine; but I think it is very wonderful to see persons of the best sense, passing away a dozen hours together in shuffling and dividing a pack of cards, with no other conversation but what is made up of a few game phrases, and no other ideas but those of black or red spots ranged together in different figures. Would not a man laugh to hear any of this species complaining that life is short?

The mind never unbends itself so agreeably as in the conversation of a well chosen friend. There is indeed no blessing of life that is in any way comparable to the enjoyment of a discreet and virtuous friend. It

eases and unloads the mind, clears and improves the understanding, engenders thought and knowledge, animates virtue and good resolution, soothes and allays the passions, and finds employment for most of the vacant hours of life.

Next to such an intimacy with a particular person, one would endeavour after a more general conversation with such as are capable of edifying, and entertaining, those with whom they converse, which are qualities that seldom go asunder.

There are many other useful amusements of life which one would endeavour to multiply, that one might on all occasions have recourse to something, rather than suffer the mind to lie idle, or run adrift with any passion that chances to rise in it.

A man that has a taste in music, painting, or architecture, is like one that has another sense, when compared with such as have no relish of those arts. The florist, the planter, the gardener, the husbandman, when they are only as accomplishments to the man of fortune, are great reliefs to a country life, and many ways useful to those who are possessed of them.

There are many who are filled with complaints that "The day hangs heavy on them," that "They do not know what to do with themselves," that "They are at a loss how to pass away their time," with many of the like shameful murmurs, which we often find in the mouths of those who are styled reasonable beings. How monstrous are such expressions among creatures who have the labours of the mind, as well as those of the body, to furnish them with proper employment; who besides the business of their proper callings and professions, can apply themselves to the duties of religion, to meditation, to the reading of useful books, to discourse; in a word, who may exercise themselves in the unbounded pursuits of knowledge and virtue, and every hour of their lives make themselves wiser or better than they were before!

I shall conclude with recommending self-examination. If every one will frequently lay his hand upon his heart, and consider what he is doing, it will check him in all the idle, or what is worse, the vicious moments of life, lift up his mind when it is running on in a series of indifferent actions, and en-

courage him when he is engaged in those which are virtuous and laudable. In a word, it will very much alleviate that guilt which the best of men have reason to acknowledge in their daily confessions, of "leaving undone those things which they ought to have done, and of doing those things which they ought not to have done."

LECTURE XXIV.

RULES FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF ONE'S SELF.

Hypocrisy at the fashionable end of the town is very different from that in the city. The modish hypocrite endeavours to appear more vicious than he really is; the other kind of hypocrite more virtuous. The former is afraid of every thing that has the show of religion in it; the latter assumes a sanctity, and covers a multitude of vices under a seeming religious deportment.

But there is another kind of hypocrisy which differs from both these. I mean that hypocrisy by which a man does not only

deceive the world, but very often imposes on himself; that hypocrisy which conceals his own heart from him, and makes him believe he is more virtuous than he really is, and either not attend to his vices, or mistake even his vices for virtues. It is this fatal hypocrisy and self deceit which is taken notice of in these words, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from my secret faults."

I shall therefore endeavour to lay down some rules for the discovery of those vices that lurk in the secret corners of the soul; and to show my reader those methods by which he may arrive at a true and impartial knowledge of himself. The best means prescribed for this purpose are, to examine ourselves by the rules which are laid down for our direction in sacred writ, and to compare our lives with the life of that person who acted up to the perfection of human nature, and is the standing example, as well as the great guide and instructor, of those who receive his doctrines. And in addition to these two methods, I propose the following to the consideration of such as would find out their secret faults.

In the first place, let them consider well what are the characters which they bear among their enemies. Our friends very often flatter us as much as our own hearts. They either do not see our faults, or conceal them from us, or soften them by their representations, after such a manner that we think them too trivial to be taken notice of. An adversary, on the contrary, makes a stricter search into us, discovers every flaw and imperfection in our tempers; and though his malice may set them in too strong a light, it has generally some ground for what it advances. A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy inflames his crimes. Plutarch has written an essay on the benefits which a man may receive from his enemies; and among the good fruits of enmity, mentions this in particular, "that by the reproaches which it casts upon us, we see the worst side of ourselves, and open our eyes to several blemishes and defects in our lives and conversations, which we should not have observed without the help of such ill-natured monitors."

In order likewise to come to a true knowledge of ourselves, we should consider on

the other hand, how far we may deserve the praises and approbations which the world bestows upon us; whether our actions proceed from laudable and worthy motives.

In the next place, that we may not deceive ourselves in a point of so much importance, we should not lay too great a stress on any supposed virtues we possess that are of a doubtful nature; and such we may esteem all those in which multitudes of men dissent from us, who are as good and wise as ourselves. We should always act with great cautiousness and circumspection on points where it is not impossible that we may be deceived. Intemperate zeal, bigotry, and persecution, for any party or opinion, how praiseworthy soever they may appear to weak men of our own principles, produce infinite calamities among mankind, and are highly criminal in their own nature; and yet how many persons, eminent for piety, suffer such monstrous and absurd principles of action to take root in their minds under the colour of virtues?

We should likewise be very apprehensive of those actions which proceed from natural constitution, favourite passions, particular

education, or whatever promotes our worldly interest or advantage. In these, or the like cases, a man's judgment is easily perverted, and a wrong bias hung upon his mind. These are the inlets of prejudice, the unguarded avenues of the mind, by which a thousand errors and secret faults find admission, without being observed or taken notice of.

There is nothing of greater importance to us than thus diligently to sift our thoughts, and examine all these dark recesses of the mind; if we would establish our souls in such a solid and substantial virtue as will turn to account in that great day, when it must stand the test of infinite wisdom and justice.

I shall conclude with observing, that the two kinds of hypocrisy I have here spoken of, namely, that of deceiving the world, and that of imposing on ourselves, are touched with wonderful beauty in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. The folly of the first kind of hypocrisy is there set forth by reflections on God's omniscience and omnipresence, which are celebrated in as noble strains of poetry as any other I ever met

with, either sacred or profane. The other kind of hypocrisy, whereby a man deceives himself, is intimated in the two last verses, where the Psalmist addresses himself to the great searcher of hearts in that emphatical petition, "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my thoughts: look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

LECTURE XXV.

EARLY PIETY.

YOUTH is the season of warm and generous emotions; the heart should then spontaneously rise into the admiration of what is great; glow with the love of what is fair and excellent; and melt at the discovery of tenderness and goodness. Where can any object be found so proper to kindle those affections as the Father of the Universe and the Author of all felicity? Unmoved by veneration, can you contemplate that gran-

deur and majesty which his works every where display? Untouched by gratitude, can you view that profusion of good which his beneficent hand pours around you? Happy in the love and affection of those with whom you are connected, look up to the Supreme Being, as the inspirer of all the friendship which has ever been shown to you by others; himself your best and your first friend, formerly the supporter of your infancy and the guide of your childhood; now, the guardian of your youth, and the hope of your coming years. View religious homage as a natural expression of gratitude to him for all his goodness, and let it be with you, not the cold and barren offspring of speculation, but the warm and vigorous dictate of the heart.

Impress your mind with reverence for all that is sacred. Let no wantonness of youthful spirits, no compliance with the intemperate mirth of others, ever betray you into profane sallies; besides the guilt which is thereby incurred, nothing gives a more odious appearance of presumption to youth than the affectation of treating religion with levity: instead of being an evidence of supe-

rior understanding, it discovers a pert and shallow mind, which, vain of the first smatterings of knowledge, presumes to make light of what the best of mankind revere. Discover on every proper occasion that you are not ashamed of your religion; but avoid making any unnecessary ostentation of it before the world.

LECTURE XXVI.

CONSOLATION OF RELIGION UNDER TRIALS.

RELIGION incontestibly triumphs when we consider it in the light of consolation; as bringing aid and relief to us amidst the distresses of life; and its happy effects in this respect furnish a strong argument, to every benevolent mind, for wishing them to be farther diffused throughout the world. For without the belief and hope afforded by divine revelation, the circumstances of man are extremely forlorn. He is conscious that his being is frail and feeble; he sees himself beset with various dangers, and is exposed

to many a melancholy apprehension, from the evils which he may have to encounter before he arrives at the close of life. In this distressed condition to reveal to him such discoveries of the Supreme Being as the Christian religion affords, is to reveal to him a father and a friend; is to let in a ray of the most cheering light upon the darkness of the human estate. He who was before a destitute orphan, wandering in the inhospitable desert, has now gained a shelter from the bitter and inclement blast. He now knows to whom to pray, and in whom to trust, where to unbosom his sorrows, and from what hand to look for relief.

It is certain that when the heart bleeds from some wound of recent misfortune, nothing is of equal efficacy with religious comfort. It is of power to enlighten the darkest hour, and to assuage the severest woe by the belief of divine favour, and the prospect of a blessed immortality. In such hopes the mind expatiates with joy; and when bereaved of its earthly friends, solaces itself with the thoughts of one friend who will never forsake it. This is an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast.

Upon the approach of death especially, when if a man thinks at all, his anxiety about his future interests must naturally increase, the power of religious consolation is sensibly felt. Then appears, in the most striking light, the high value of the discoveries made by the Gospel; not only life and immortality revealed, but a Mediator with God discovered; mercy proclaimed, through him, to the frailties of the penitent and the humble; and his presence promised to be with them when they are passing through the valley of the shadow of death, in order to bring them safe into unseen habitations of rest and joy. Here is ground for their leaving the world with comfort and peace. But in this severe and trying period, this labouring hour of nature, how shall the unhappy man support himself, who knows not, or believes not, the hope of religion? Secretly conscious to himself that he has not acted his part as he ought to have done, the sins of his past life arise before him in sad remembrance. The Governor of the world is unknown. He cannot tell whether every endeavour to obtain his mercy may not be in vain. All is awful obscurity around him;

and in the midst of endless doubts and perplexities, the trembling reluctant soul is forced away from the body. As the misfortunes of life must, to such a man, have been most oppressive, so its end is bitter; his sun sets in a dark cloud, and the night of death closes over his head, full of misery.

LECTURE XXVII.

GENTLENESS.

Gentleness corrects whatever is offensive in our manners; and, by a constant train of humane attentions, studies to alleviate the burden of common misery.

That gentleness which is the characteristic of a good man, has, like every other virtue, its seat in the heart: and let me add, nothing except what flows from it can render even external manners truly pleasing, for no assumed behaviour can at all times hide the real character.

Years may pass over our heads without affording any opportunities for acts of high

beneficence or extensive utility: whereas not a day passes, but in the common transactions of life, and especially in the intercourse of domestic society, gentleness finds place for promoting the happiness of others, and for strengthening in ourselves the habit of virtue: nay, by seasonable discoveries of a humane spirit we sometimes contribute more materially to the advancement of happiness than by actions that are more seemingly important. There are situations, not a few, in human life, where the encouraging reception, the condescending behaviour, and the look of sympathy, bring greater relief to the heart than the most bountiful gift: while, on the other side, when the hand of liberality is extended to bestow the want of gentleness is sufficient to frustrate the intention of the benefit; we sour those whom we meant to oblige, and by conferring favours with ostentation and harshness, we convert them into injuries.

Gentleness is, in truth, the great avenue to mutual enjoyment. Amidst the strife of interfering interests, it tempers the violence of contention, and keeps alive the seeds of harmony; it softens animosity, renews en-

dearments, and renders the countenance of a man, a refreshment to a man.

Whatever ends a good man can be supposed to pursue, gentleness will be found to favour them; it prepossesses and wins every heart; it persuades, when every other argument fails; often disarms the fierce, and melts the stubborn: whereas harshness confirms the opposition it would subdue; and, of an indifferent person, creates an enemy.

As soon may the waves of the sea cease to roll, as provocations to arise from human corruption and frailty. Attacked by great injuries, the man of mild and gentle spirit will feel what human nature feels, and will defend and resent as his duty allows him: but to those slight provocations and frivolous offences which are the most frequent causes of disquiet, he is happily superior; taught to regard with indulgent eye, the frailties of men; the omissions of the careless, the follies of the imprudent, and the levity of the fickle, he retreats into the calmness of his spirit, as into an undisturbed sanctuary, and quietly allows the usual current of life to hold its course.

But gentleness will, most of all, be pro-

moted by frequent views of those great objects which our holy religion presents; let the prospects of immortality fill your minds; look upon this world as a state of passage; consider yourselves as engaged in the pursuit of higher interests, as acting now, under the eye of God, an introductory part to a more important scene: elevated by such sentiments, your minds will become calm and sedate, you will look down, as from a superior station, on the petty disturbances of the world.

Aided by such considerations, let us cultivate that gentle wisdom which is, in so many respects, important both to our duty and our happiness: let us assume it as the ornament of every age, and of every station; let it temper the petulance of youth, and soften the moroseness of old age; let it mitigate authority in those who rule, and promote deference among those who obey.

I conclude with the caution, not to mistake for true gentleness that flimsy imitation of it called polished manners, which often, among the men of the world, under a smooth appearance, conceals much asperity: let yours be native gentleness of the heart,

flowing from the love of God and the love of man. Unite this amiable spirit with a proper zeal for all that is right and just and true: let piety be combined in your character with humanity; let determined integrity dwell in a mild and gentle breast. A character thus supported will command more real respect than can be procured by the most shining accomplishments, when separated from virtue.

LECTURE XXVIII.

MATT. CHAP. III.

The subject of this Lecture will be the third chapter of St. Matthew, in which we have the history of a very extraordinary person called John the Baptist; to distinguish him from John the Evangelist.

As the character of John the Baptist is in many respects a very remarkable one, and his appearance bears a strong testimony to the divine mission of Christ, and the truth of his religion, I shall give some particulars of his history.

St. Matthew's account of him is as fol-

lows: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, *Repent ye,* for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, saying, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. And there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the regions round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins."

Here then we have a person, who appears to have been sent into the world on purpose to be the precursor of our Lord, to prepare the way for him and his religion, here called the *kingdom of heaven,* and, as the prophet expresses it, to *make his paths straight;* that is, to remove out of the minds of men every thing that opposed itself to the admission of divine truth, all prejudice, blindness, pride, obstinacy, self conceit, vanity, and vain philosophy; but above all, to subdue and regulate those depraved affections, appetites, passions, and inveterate habits of

wickedness, which are the grand obstacles to conversion and the reception of the word of God.

His exhortation therefore was, "*Repent ye*;" renounce those vices and abominations which at present blind your eyes and cloud your understandings, and then you will be able to see the truth and bear the light.

The place which John chose for the exercise of his ministry was the wilderness of Judea; here he lived with great austerity, for he drank neither wine nor strong drink, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. The clothing of the Baptist was no less simple than his diet: his raiment was of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins.

The abstemiousness and rigour of the Baptist's life was calculated to produce very important effects. It was fitted to excite great attention and reverence in the minds of his hearers. It was well suited to the doctrine he was to preach, that of *repentance and contrition*. And perhaps it was further designed to intimate the need there often is of harsh restraints in the *beginning* of virtue, as the easy familiarity of our Lord's manner

and behaviour exhibits the delightful freedom which attends the *perfection* of it.

It is remarkable, however, that whatever mortifications John practised himself, it does not appear that he prescribed any thing to others beyond the ordinary duties of a good life. His general injunction was only, "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." When more particular directions were desired, he commanded all sorts of men to avoid more especially the sins to which their condition most exposed them. Thus when the people asked him (the common people of that hard hearted nation) "What shall we do?" John answered, "He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." That is, let every one of you, according to his abilities, exercise those duties of charity and kindness to his neighbour, which you are all of you but too apt to neglect. The publicans, or farmers of the revenue, came to him and said, "Master, what shall we do?" And he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Keep clear from that rapine and extortion of which you are so often guilty in the collection of the revenue.

The soldiers too demanded of him, "What shall we do?" his answer was, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." That is, abstain from those acts of injustice, violence, and oppression, to which your profession too often leads you. And therefore what he taught was not ceremonial observances, but moral conduct on religious principle; and without this, he pronounced the highest outward privileges to be of no value at all.

Such were the doctrines which John preached to his disciples, and the success which attended him was equal to their magnitude and importance.

Far from desiring or attempting to fix the admiration of the multitude on his own person, he gave notice, from his first appearance, of *another* immediately to follow him, for whom he was unworthy to perform the most servile offices.

Of such unaffected and disinterested humility as this, where shall we find, except in Christ, another instance? Yet with this was by no means united what we are too apt to associate with our idea of humility, *meanness and timidity of spirit;* on the con-

trary, the whole conduct of the Baptist was marked throughout with the most intrepid courage and magnanimity in the discharge of his duty.

Instead of paying any court either to the great men of his nation on the one hand, or to the multitude on the other, he reproved the former for their hypocrisy in the strongest terms; "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And he required the latter to renounce every one of those favourite sins which they had long indulged, and were most unwilling to part with. But what is still more, he reproved, without fear and without reserve, the abandoned and ferocious Herod, for injuriously taking away Herodias his brother's wife; although he well knew that this boldness of expostulation would sooner or later bring down upon him the whole weight of his resentment. But knowing also, that he was sent into the world to preach repentance to all, and feeling it his duty to cry aloud and spare not, to spare not even the greatest and most exalted of sinners, he determined not to shrink from

that duty, but to obey his conscience, and take the consequences.

These consequences were exactly what he must have foreseen. He was first shut up in prison; and not long afterwards, as you all know, the life of this great and innocent man was wantonly sacrificed.

After this short history of the doctrines, the life, and the death of this extraordinary man, I shall conclude, with a few remarks upon it for your serious consideration.

And in the first place, in the testimony of John the Baptist we have an additional and powerful evidence to the truth and the divine authority of Christ and his religion.

It appears, too, that John was a person of whose virtue, integrity, and piety, we have the most ample testimony from an historian of unquestionable veracity, and we may therefore rely with perfect confidence on every thing he tells us. He was the very man foretold both by Isaiah and Malachi, as the forerunner of that divine personage whom the Jews expected under the name of the Messiah. He declared that Jesus Christ was this divine person, and that

he himself was sent into the world on purpose to prepare the way before him, by exhorting men to repentance and reformation of life. Every thing he said of Jesus, instead of aggrandizing and exalting *himself*, tended to lower and to debase him in the eyes of all the world; he assured the multitude that followed him that there was another person much more worthy to be followed; that there was one coming after him of far greater consequence and dignity than himself; one whose shoe latchets he was not worthy to unloose; one so infinitely superior to him in rank, authority, and wisdom, that he was not fit to perform for him even the most servile offices. He himself was only come as an humble messenger to announce the arrival of his Lord, and smooth the way before him. But the great personage to whom they were to direct their eyes, and in whom they were to centre all their hopes, was *Jesus Christ*.

But besides bearing this honest and disinterested testimony to Christ, the Baptist hazarded a measure which no impostor or enthusiast ever ventured upon without being immediately detected and exposed: he ven-

tured to deliver *two prophecies* concerning Christ; prophecies too which were to be completed, not at some distant period, when both he and his hearers might be in their graves, and the prophecy itself forgot, but within a very short space of time, when every one who heard the prediction might be a witness to its accomplishment or its failure. He foretold that *Jesus should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire,* and that *he should be offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.* Both these prophecies were actually accomplished within a very few years after they were delivered; for our Lord suffered death upon the cross for the redemption of the world; and the Holy Ghost descended visibly upon the apostles in the semblance of fire on the day of Pentecost.

It is evident then that the Baptist was not only a good man, but a true prophet; and for both reasons his testimony in favour of Christ, that he was the Son of God, affords an incontestable proof that both he and his religion came from heaven.

The history of the Baptist affords a proof also of another point of no small importance. It gives a strong confirmation to that great

evangelical doctrine, the doctrine of atonement, the expiation of our sins by the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

We are often told that there was no need for this expiation. That repentance and reformation are fully sufficient to restore the most abandoned sinners to the favour of a just and merciful God, and to avert the punishment due to their offences.

But what does the great herald and forerunner of Christ say to this? He came professedly as a preacher of repentance. This was his peculiar office, the great object of his mission, the constant topic of his exhortations—"Repent ye, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance." This was the unceasing language of "the voice crying in the wilderness."

If then repentance alone had sufficient efficacy for the expiation of sin, surely we should have heard of this from him who came on purpose to preach repentance. But what is the case? Does he tell us that repentance *alone* will take away the guilt of our transgressions, and justify us in the eyes of our Maker? Quite the contrary. Notwithstanding the great stress he justly lays

on the indispensable necessity of repentance, yet he tells his followers, at the same time, that it was to *Christ only*, and to his death, that they were to look for the pardon of their sins. "Behold," says he, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!" And again, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Since then the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of Christ is a doctrine not only taught in the Gospel itself, but enforced also by him who came only to prepare the way for it, it is evident, from the care taken to apprise the world of it even *before* Christianity was promulgated, how important and essential a part this must be of that divine religion.

John's exhortation was "*Repent ye*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Till you have done this, till you have purified your hearts and abandoned your sins, my baptism will be of no use to you. In perfect conformity to this, Josephus informs us that John exhorted the Jews not to come to his baptism without first preparing themselves for it *by the practice of virtue*, by a strict ad-

herence to the rules of equity and justice in their dealings with one another, and by manifesting a sincere piety towards God.

This is the preparation he required. It is not in general the want of evidence, but the want of virtue, that makes men infidels; let them cease to be wicked, and they will soon cease to be unbelievers. "It is with the heart," says St. Paul (not with the head), "that man believeth unto righteousness." Correct the heart, and all will go right. Unless the soil is good, all the seed you cast upon it will be wasted in vain. Unbelievers complain of the mysteries of revelation; but we have the highest authority for saying, that, *in general,* the only mystery which prevents them from receiving it is the mystery of iniquity.

On this authority, then, we may securely rely, and may rest assured that whatever pretences may be set up for rejecting revelation, the grand obstacles to it are indolence, indifference, vice, passion, prejudice, self-conceit, pride, vanity, love of singularity, a disdain to think with the vulgar, and an ambition to be considered as superior to the rest of mankind in genius, penetration, and

discernment. These (to make use of prophetic language) are the *mountains* that must be made low; these the *crooked paths* that must be made straight; these the *rough places* that must be made plain. Then all difficulties will be removed, and there will be A HIGH WAY FOR OUR GOD. Then there will be a smooth and easy approach for the Gospel to the understanding, as well as to the heart; there will be nothing to oppose its conquest over the soul. THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHALL FULLY BE REVEALED, AND ALL FLESH SHALL SEE IT.

LECTURE XXIX.

MATTHEW, CHAP. IV. LATTER PART.

IN the latter part of this chapter an account is given of the first opening of our blessed Lord's ministry, by his preaching, by his choosing a few companions to attend him, and by his beginning to work miracles.

On this undertaking our Lord now entered; and we are informed by St. Matthew,

in the seventeenth verse of this chapter, in what *manner* he first announced himself and his religion to the world. His first address to the people was similar to that of the Baptist, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The very first qualification he required of those who aspired to be his disciples was *repentance*, a sincere contrition for all past offences, and a resolution to renounce in future every species of sin; for sin, he well knew, would be the grand obstacle to the reception of his Gospel. "Put off all thy vicious habits," says Christ, to every one that aspires to be his disciple; "for the religion thou art to embrace is a holy religion, and the God thou art to serve is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot even *look* upon iniquity." The preparation for receiving the Christian religion is *the preparation of the heart.* The discipline required for a participation of its privileges is the mortification of sin, the sacrifice of every guilty propensity and desire.

Our Saviour then proceeds to select and associate to himself a certain number of persons, who were to be his assistants and

coadjutors in the establishment and the administration of his heavenly kingdom.

And we find that not the wise, not the mighty, not the noble, were called to cooperate with him; but men of the meanest birth, of the lowest occupations, of the humblest talents, and most uncultivated minds. He chose, as the apostle expresses it, "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; that his religion might not be established by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but by demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Here then began that DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER, which was to be the grand basis of his new kingdom, the great evidence of his heavenly mission.

Our Lord knew that it was highly proper and indispensably necessary to give some evidence of his divine commission; to do *something* which should satisfy the world that he was the Son of God, and the delegate of heaven. And how could he do

this so effectually as by performing works which it utterly exceeded all the strength and ability of man to accomplish, and which nothing less than the hand of God himself could possibly bring to pass? In other words, the proofs he gave of his mission were those astonishing miracles which are recorded in the Gospel, and which St. Matthew mentions in the twenty-third verse of this chapter: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

This then is the primary, the fundamental evidence of his divine authority, which our Lord was pleased to give to his followers. His first application was to their *hearts*. "REPENT YE," lay aside your vices and your prejudices. Till this was done, till these grand obstacles to the admission of truth were removed, he well knew that all he could say and all he could do would have no effect; they would not be moved either by his exhortations or his miracles; "they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The way being thus clear-

ed, the evidence was then produced, and the effect it had was such as might have been expected, for St. Matthew tells us that his fame went throughout all Syria; and that there followed him *great multitudes* of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan; that is, from every quarter of his own country and the adjoining nations.

And indeed it can be no wonder that such multitudes were convinced and converted by what they saw. The wonder would have been if they had not. To those who were themselves eyewitnesses of his miracles, they must have been (except in a few instances of inveterate depravity of heart) irresistible proofs of his divine mission. When they saw him give eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, and even life to the dead, by speaking only a few words, what other conclusion could they possibly draw than that which the centurion did, *truly this was the Son of God?*

These miracles are recorded in four different histories, written very near the same time of their being performed, by four diffe-

rent men, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; two of whom saw these miracles with their own eyes; the other two had their account from them who did the same, and affirm "that they had a perfect knowledge of every thing they relate."

Nor is there any reason to doubt whether the writings we now have under their names are those which they actually wrote. They have been received as such ever since they were published; nor has any one argument been yet produced against their authenticity which has not been repeatedly and effectually confuted.

It is a very strong circumstance in favour of our Saviour's miracles, that they were related by contemporary historians, by those who were eyewitnesses of them, and were afterwards acknowledged to be true by those who lived nearest to the times in which they were wrought; and what is still more to the point, by many who were hostile to the Christian religion.

Unless we admit that the Founder of our religion did actually work the miracles ascribed to him by his historians, it is utterly

impossible to account for the success and establishment of his religion.

Consider only for a moment what the apparent condition of our Lord was when he first announced his mission among the Jews, what his pretensions and what his doctrines were, and then judge what kind of a reception he must have met with among the Jews, had his preaching been accompanied by no miracles.

He called upon this people to renounce at once a great part of the religion of their forefathers, and to adopt that which he proposed to them. Instead of exterior forms, he prescribed sanctity of manners; instead of washing their hands, and making clean their platters, he commanded them to purify their hearts and reform their lives. Instead of indulging in ease and luxury, he called upon them to take up their cross and follow him through sorrows and sufferings; to pluck out a right eye, and to cut off a right arm; to leave father, mother, brethren, and sisters, for his name's sake and the Gospel.

He convinced then his hearers by the miracles he wrought, that all power in hea-

ven and in earth was given to him, and that every precept he delivered, and every doctrine he taught, was the voice of God himself. Without this it is utterly impossible to give any rational account of his success.

The miracles of our Lord were not merely transient acts, beheld at the moment with astonishment, but forgot as soon as over, and productive of no important consequences. They gave birth to a new religion, to a new mode of worship, to several new and singular institutions, such as the rite of baptism, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the appropriation of the *first* day of the week to sacred purposes, and other things of the same nature. Now this religion and these institutions subsist to this day. And as the books of the New Testament affirm that this religion and these institutions were first established, and afterward made their way by the power of miracles, they are standing testimonies to the truth and the reality of those miracles, without which they could never have taken such deep root at the first, and continued unshaken through so many ages to the present time.

When therefore we put together all these considerations, they can leave no doubt on any unprejudiced mind that the account given in this chapter of the commencement of our Saviour's ministry, and the reasons of his astonishing success, are perfectly accurate and true; namely, "that he went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease among the people." And our conclusion from this must necessarily be the same with that of the great Jewish ruler, who, with a laudable anxiety to know the truth, came to Jesus by night, and addressed him in these words: "Rabbi, we *know* that thou art a teacher come from God; *for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.*"

LECTURE XXX.

MATTHEW, CHAP. V.

Our blessed Lord, having, by his miracles, established his divine authority, and acquired a right to the attention of his hearers, and a powerful influence over their minds, proceeds in the next place to explain to them in some degree the nature of his religion, the duties it enjoins, and the dispositions it requires. This he does in what is commonly called his Sermon on the Mount; and we may venture to say it contains a greater variety of new, important, and excellent moral precepts, than is any where to be found in the same compass.

Our Saviour begins with describing those dispositions and virtues which mark the Christian character, in which the Gospel peculiarly delights, but which the world despises and rejects.

"Blessed," says he, "are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

" Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

" Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

" Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

" Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

" Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

" Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.

" Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

" Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

It is evident that our Lord here meant, at the very outset of his public instructions, to mark at once, in the strongest and most decided terms, the peculiar temper, spirit, and character of his religion; and to show to his disciples how completely opposite

they were to all those splendid and popular qualities which were the great objects of admiration and applause to the heathen world, and are still too much so, even to the Christian world.

I request your attention to one particular part of our Lord's exordium, which requires a little explanation.

The part is this—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

By inheriting the earth our Lord meant those things which are, without question, the greatest *blessings* upon earth—calmness and composure of spirit, tranquillity, cheerfulness, peace and comfort of mind. These are the peculiar portion and recompense of the *meek*. Unassuming, gentle, and humble in their deportment, they give no offence, they create no enemies, they provoke no hostilities, and thus escape all that large proportion of human misery which arises from dissensions and disputes; yet they are excluded from no rational pleasure, no legitimate delight; and as they are more exempt from anxiety and pain than other men, their sum total of happiness is greater,

and they may, in the best sense of the word, be said *to inherit the earth.*

I proceed to notice such other passages of this admirable discourse as appear to me to deserve peculiar attention and consideration.

The first of these is that which begins with the twenty-first verse—"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." And again, in the same manner at the twenty-seventh verse: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Our Saviour's morality does not content itself with merely controlling our outward

actions, but it goes much deeper; it imposes its restraints, it places its guard exactly where it ought to do; on our thoughts and on our hearts. Former moralists contented themselves with saying, thou shalt not kill. But *I* (says our Lord) go much further; *I* say, thou shalt not indulge any *resentment* against thy brother. Former moralists have said, thou shalt not commit adultery: but *I* say, let not thine *heart* or thine *eye* commit adultery; for here it is that the sin begins; and here it must be crushed in its birth.

This is wisdom, this is morality in its most perfect form. Our Lord, like a wise physician, goes at once to the bottom of the evil, and proceeds to say, in terms highly figurative and alarming, but not too strong for the occasion: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that *one* of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not

that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Every one must immediately see that the eye to be plucked out is the eye of concupiscence, and the hand to be cut off is the hand of violence and vengeance; that is, these passions are to be checked and subdued, let the conflict cost us what it may.

The passage to which I shall next advert is the following: "Ye have heard it has been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but *I* say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also: and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also: and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

No one can imagine that this injunction and those of the same kind that follow, are to be understood strictly and literally; that we are to submit, without the least opposition, to every injury and every insult that is offered to us, and are absolutely precluded from every degree of self preserva-

tion and self defence. This could not possibly answer any one rational purpose, nor conduce in the least to the peace and happiness of mankind, which were certainly the objects our Saviour had in view: but the figurative expressions are intended only to convey a general precept, and to describe that peculiar *temper* and *disposition* which the Gospel requires: that patience, gentleness, mildness, moderation, and forbearance under injuries and affronts, which is best calculated to preserve the peace of our own minds, as well as that of the world at large, which tends to soften resentment and turn away wrath, and without which, on one side or the other, provocations must be endless, and enmities eternal.

All therefore that is here required of us is plainly and simply this; that we should not suffer our resentment of injuries to carry us beyond the bounds of justice, equity, and Christian charity, and always show a disposition to conciliate and forgive.

The chapter concludes with another remarkable precept, which may strictly be called a *new* commandment; for in no moral code is it to be found, till our Lord gave it a place in his.

The precept is this: "Ye have heard it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

So noble, so sublime, and so benevolent a precept, was never before given to man; and it is one strong proof, among many others, of the originality of our Saviour's character and religion.

It has been objected to this command, of *loving our enemies*, that it is extravagant and impracticable; that it is impossible for any man to bring himself to entertain any real love for his enemies.

This objection evidently goes upon the supposition that we are to love our enemies in the same manner and degree, and with the same cordiality and ardour of affection, that we do our relations and friends. And if this were required, it might indeed be considered as a harsh injunction. But our Lord

was not so severe a taskmaster as to expect this at our hands. There are different degrees of love, as well as of every other human affection; and these degrees are to be duly proportioned to the different objects of our regard. There is one degree due to our relations, another to our benefactors, another to our friends, another to strangers, another to our enemies.

Our Lord's precept exacts nothing but what is both reasonable and practicable. It explains what is meant by *loving* our enemies in the words that immediately follow: "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you:" that is, do not *retaliate* upon your enemy; do not return his execrations, his injuries, and his persecutions with similar treatment; do not turn upon him his own weapons, but endeavour to subdue him with weapons of a celestial temper, with kindness and compassion. This is of all others the most effectual way of vanquishing an enraged enemy. The interpretation here given is amply confirmed by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, which is an admirable com-

ment on this passage: "Dearly beloved," says he, "avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for vengeance is mine; I will repay," saith the Lord.

"Therefore, if thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

This then is the *love* that we are to show our enemies; not that ardour of affection which we feel towards our friends, but that kind of *love* which is called Christian charity, and which we ought to exercise towards every human being, especially in distress. If even our enemy hunger, we are to feed him; if he thirst, we are to give him drink; and thus shall obtain the noblest of all triumphs, "we shall overcome evil with good." The world, if they please, may call this meanness of spirit; but it is in fact the truest magnanimity and elevation of soul. It is far more glorious and more difficult to subdue our own resentments, and to act with generosity and kindness to our adversary, than to make him feel the severest effects of our vengeance. It is this noblest act of self-government, this conquest over our

strongest passions, which our Saviour here requires. It is what constitutes the highest perfection of our nature; and it is this *perfection* which is meant in the concluding verse of this chapter: "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" that is, in your conduct towards your enemies, approach as near as you are able to that perfection of mercy which your heavenly Father manifests towards *his* enemies, towards the evil and the unjust, on whom he maketh his sun to rise as well as on the righteous and the just. This sense of the word *perfect* is established beyond controversy by the parallel passage in St. Luke; where, instead of the terms made use of by St. Matthew, "Be ye therefore *perfect,* as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," the evangelist expressly says, "Be ye therefore *merciful,* as your Father also is merciful."

This then is the perfection which you are to exert your utmost efforts to attain; and if you succeed in your attempt, your reward shall be great indeed; you shall, as our Lord assures you, be the *children of the Most High.*

LECTURE XXXI.

MATTHEW, CHAP. VI. AND VII.

In these two chapters our Lord continues and concludes his admirable discourse from the Mount.

The first thing to be noticed here is a strong and repeated caution to avoid all show and ostentation in the performance of our religious duties.

The three instances specified are the acts of giving alms, of praying, and of fasting.

The direction with regard to the first is, "Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thy alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand

doeth, that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly."

In the same manner with regard to prayer, the rule is, "When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But *thou*, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Lastly, a similar precaution applies also to the act of fasting: "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

In all these passages the point to be noticed is a strong and marked disapprobation of every thing that looks like ostenta-

tion, parade, vainglory, insincerity, or hypocrisy, in the discharge of our Christian duties. They show in the clearest light the spirit and temper of the Christian religion, which is modest, silent, retired, quiet, unobtrusive, shunning the observation and the applause of men, and looking only to the approbation of Him who seeth every thought of our hearts, and every secret motive of our actions.

They establish this as the grand principle of action for every disciple of Christ, that in every part of his moral and religious conduct he is to have no other object in view but *the favour of God.*

Having made this general observation upon the whole, I shall now proceed to remark on the particular instances adduced, in order to establish the leading principle.

And first, we are directed to give our alms so privately that "our left hand shall not know what our right hand doeth." This evidently implies the utmost secrecy in the distribution of our charity; and this is undoubtedly the rule we are in general to observe. But it is by no means to be inferred from hence that we are never, on

any occasion, to give our alms in public. In contributing, for instance, to any public charity, or to the relief of some great calamity, private or public, we cannot well conceal our beneficence, or if we could, we ought not. Our example may induce many others to exert a similar generosity: in these then, and such like cases, we are required to make our "light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven." As far, therefore, as the *reason* of this command goes, it is not only allowable, but our duty, to let our generous deeds be *sometimes* known to the world. But then we ought to take especial care, at the same time, that we bestow a much *larger* proportion of our alms in secrecy and in silence; that we suffer no one to witness our beneficence but Him who *must* see every thing we do, and that we have no other object whatever in view but his approbation and his immortal rewards.

The next instance adduced to confirm the general principle of seeking the approbation not of men, but of God, is that of prayer.

The passage on this subject which we

have already quoted has been made use of by some writers as an argument against all *public* prayer, which they say is here plainly prohibited. But for this there is not the smallest foundation.

It is of *private* prayer only that our Lord is here speaking; and besides, we find in Scripture that public worship is enjoined as a duty of the highest importance. God declares by the prophet Isaiah, "that his house shall be called a house of prayer for *all* people." He taught his disciples too a form of prayer, which, though very proper to be used by any single person in private, yet is throughout expressed in the plural number, and adapted to the use of several persons praying at the same time.

It is therefore incontestably clear that our Saviour could not possibly mean to forbid that public worship which he himself practised and commanded. His intentions could only be to confine our private prayers to private places, in which we are to keep up a secret intercourse with our Maker, withdrawn from the eye of the world, and unobserved by any other than that Almighty Being to whom our petitions are addressed.

The last instance produced by our Saviour is that of fasting. "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

There is very little necessity to dwell on this precept here, for there are scarce any in these times and in this country who seem disposed to make a *show* of fasting, or to be ambitious of acquiring a reputation for that kind of religious discipline; on the contrary, it is by great numbers entirely laid aside, and too frequently treated with derision and contempt. Yet from this very passage we may learn that it ought to be considered in a much more serious light; for although our Saviour did not command his disciples to fast whilst he was with them, yet he himself fasted for forty days. He here plainly supposes that his disciples did sometimes fast; and gives them directions how to per-

form that duty in a manner acceptable to God. And it appears also, that if they did so perform it, if they fasted without any ostentation or parade, with a design not to catch the applause of men, but to approve themselves to God, he assured them *they should have their reward.*

The next thing which peculiarly demands our attention in this chapter is the declaration contained in the twenty-fourth verse, which presents to us another fundamental principle of the Christian religion; namely, the necessity of giving the *first* place in our hearts and our affections to God and religion, and pursuing other things only in subordination to those great objects. "No man," says our Lord, "can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The word mammon is generally interpreted to mean *riches* only; but the original rather directs us to take it in a more general sense, as comprehending every thing that is capable of being an object of *trust* or a ground of *confidence* to men of worldly minds, such as wealth,

power, honour, fame, business, sensual pleasures, gay amusements, and all the other various pursuits of the present scene. It is these that constitute what we usually express by the word *world*, when opposed to religion. Here then are the two masters who claim dominion over us, God and the world; and one of these we must serve; both we cannot, because their dispositions and their commands are in general diametrically opposite to each other. The world invites us to indulge all our appetites without control, and to entangle ourselves in the cares and distractions of business, to engage with eagerness in endless contests for superiority in power, wealth, and honour, or to give up ourselves, body and soul, to gaiety, amusement, pleasure, and every kind of luxurious indulgence. These are the services which *one* master requires. But there is another master, whose injunctions are of a very different nature. That master is GOD; and *his* commands are to give him our hearts, to love him with all our heart and soul, and mind, and strength; to be temperate in all things; to make our moderation known unto all men; to fix our

affections on things above; to have our conversation in heaven; to cast all our care upon him; and to take up our cross and follow Christ.

Judge now whether it be possible to serve these two masters at one and the same time, and to obey the commands of each; commands so perfectly contradictory to each other.

Our Maker expects to reign absolute in our hearts; he will not be served by halves, he will not accept of a divided empire, he will not suffer us to halt between two opinions. We must take our choice, and adhere to one side or the other. "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

The God whom we serve is not a hard master, nor does his religion contain any too severe restrictions. Christianity forbids no necessary occupations, no reasonable indulgences, no innocent relaxations. It allows us to use the world, provided we not abuse it. All it requires is, that our liberty degenerate not into licentiousness, our amusements into dissipation, our industry into incessant toil, our carefulness into extreme

anxiety and endless solicitude. So far from forbidding us to engage in business, it expressly commands us not to be slothful in it, and to labour with our hands for the things that be needful; it enjoins every one to abide in the calling wherein he was called, and perform all the duties of it. When it requires us "to be temperate in all things," it plainly tells us that we *may* use *all* things temperately; when it directs us "to make our moderation known unto all men," this evidently implies that within the bounds of moderation we may enjoy all the reasonable conveniences and comforts of the present life.

When Christ says, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon; therefore take no thought for your life what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on;" this is most clearly explained a few verses after, in these words, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The meaning of the precept is evidently this; not that we are absolutely to take no thought for our life, and the means of supporting it, but that our thoughts are

not to be *wholly* or *principally* occupied with these things. We are not to indulge an immoderate and unceasing anxiety and solicitude about them.

In the same manner with respect to pleasures, we are not forbid to have *any* love for them; we are only commanded not to be lovers of pleasure *more* than lovers of God.

The ruling passion of the Christian must be the love of his Maker and Redeemer. This it is which must principally occupy his thoughts, his time, his attention, his heart. If there be any thing else which has gained the ascendancy over our souls, on which our desires, our wishes, our hopes, our fears, are *chiefly* fixed, God is then dispossessed of his rightful dominion over us; we serve another master, and we shall think but little of our Maker, or any thing belonging to him.

His empire over our hearts must, in short, at all events be maintained. When this point is once secured, every inferior gratification that is consistent with his sovereignty, his glory, and his commands, is perfectly allowable; every thing that is hostile to them must at once be renounced.

This is a plain rule, and a very important one. It is the principle which our blessed Lord meant here to establish, and it must be the governing principle of our lives.

Next to this in importance is another command, which you will find in the twelfth verse of the seventh chapter; "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." As the former precepts which we have been considering relate to God, this relates to man; it is the grand rule by which we must in all cases regulate our conduct towards our neighbour, and it is a rule, plain, simple, concise, intelligible, comprehensive, and every way worthy of its divine Author.

As it is my purpose to touch only on the most important and most generally useful parts of our Saviour's discourse, I shall pass over what remains of it, and hasten to the conclusion, which is expressed by the sacred historian in these words: "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." He drew

their attention to the greatest and the noblest objects; the existence of One Supreme Almighty Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; the first formation of man; his fall from original innocence; the consequent corruption and depravity of his nature; the remedy provided for him by the goodness of our Maker and the death of our Redeemer; the nature of that divine religion which he himself came to reveal to mankind; the purity of heart and sanctity of life which he required; the communications of God's Holy Spirit to assist our own feeble endeavours here, and a crown of immortal glory to recompense us hereafter.

The morality he taught was the purest, the soundest, the sublimest, the most perfect that had ever before entered into the imagination, or proceeded from the lips of man: and he added to the whole the weight, the irresistible weight, of his own example. He, and he only, of all the sons of men, acted up in every the minutest instance to what he taught; and his life exhibited a perfect portrait of his religion. But what completed the whole was, that he taught,

as the evangelist expresses it, *with authority*, with the authority of a divine teacher. He spoke in the name of God: he called himself the Son of God. He enforced every thing he taught by the most solemn and awful sanctions, by the promise of eternal felicity to those who obeyed him, and a denunciation of the most tremendous punishment to those who rejected him.

These were the circumstances which gave our blessed Lord the authority with which he spake. No wonder then that the people "were astonished at his doctrines," and that they all declared "he spake as never man spake."

LECTURE XXXII.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XIII.

I SHALL now lay before you such reflections as the parable of the Sower has suggested to my mind.

It is evident that there are four different classes of men here described, which comprehend all the different religious or irre-

ligious characters that are to be met with in the world. The first consists of those "that hear the word of the kingdom (as our Lord expresses it) and understand it not; then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in their hearts. These are they (says he) which received seed by the way side." By these are meant those persons whose minds, like the beaten high road, are hard and impenetrable, and inaccessible to conviction.

Besides these, there is another description of men on whom the good seed makes little or no impression; these are the thoughtless, the inattentive, the inconsiderate, the trifling, the gay, who think of nothing beyond the present scene, and who do not consider themselves as in the smallest degree interested in any thing else.

Being born of Christian parents, and instructed perhaps in the first rudiments of Christianity, they call themselves Christians, they attend divine service, they repeat their prayers, they listen to the discourses of the preacher, but here their religion ends; it never goes beyond the surface, it never penetrates into their hearts, *it lies on the hard*

beaten highway. The instant they leave the church every idea of religion vanishes out of their thoughts; they never reflect for one moment on what they have heard; they never consider the infinite importance of what is to happen after death; the awful prospects of eternity never present themselves to their minds, neither excite their hopes nor alarm their fears.

These two characters, the hardened unbeliever, and the mere nominal Christian, constitute the first class described by our Saviour in the parable of the Sower. These are they which receive the seed by the way side, where it lies neglected upon the surface till "the fowls of the air devour it, or the wicked one catcheth it out of their hearts;" and there is an end at once of all their hopes of salvation, perhaps for ever.

Secondly. There is another sort of soil mentioned in the parable, which gives the seed at first a more favourable reception. When it falls on stony ground, it finds no great difficulty in gaining admission into a little loose earth scattered upon a rock; it springs up with amazing rapidity; but no sooner "does the sun rise upon it with its

scorching heat, than it withers away for want of depth of earth, root, and moisture."

What a lively representation is this of weak and unstable Christians! they receive Christianity at first with gladness; they are extremely ready to be made eternally happy, and suppose they have nothing else to do but to repeat their creed, and take possession of heaven. But when they find that there are certain conditions to be performed on *their* parts also; that they must give up their favourite interests, and restrain their strongest passions; must sometimes even pluck out a right eye, or tear off a right arm; that they must take up their cross and follow a crucified Saviour through many difficulties, distresses, and persecutions, their ardour and alacrity are instantly extinguished. They want strength of mind, soundness of principle, and sincerity of faith to support them. No wonder then that they fall away and depart from their allegiance to their divine Master and Redeemer. This is the second sort of hearers described in the parable, "that receive the word at first with joy; but having no root in themselves, when tribulation and persecution arise be-

cause of the word, by and by they are offended."

There is a third portion of the seed, that falls among thorns. This wants neither root nor depth of earth. It grows up; but the misfortune is, that the thorns grow up with it. The fault of the soil is not that of bearing nothing, but of bearing too much; of bearing what it ought not, of exhausting its strength and nutrition on vile and worthless productions, which choke the good seed, and prevent it from coming to perfection. "These are they (says our Saviour, in the parallel place of St. Luke) which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." In their youth, perhaps, they receive religious instruction, they imbibe right principles, and listen to good advice; but no sooner do they *go forth*, no sooner do they leave those persons and those places from whom they receive them, than they take the road either of business or of pleasure, pursue their interests, their amusements, or their guilty indulgences with unbounded eagerness, and have neither time nor inclination to culti-

vate the seeds of religion that have been sown in their hearts, and to eradicate the weeds that have been mingled with them. The consequence is, the weeds prevail, and the seeds are choked and lost.

But how then, it is said, are we to conduct ourselves? If Providence has blessed us with riches, with honour, with power, with reputation, are we to reject these gifts of our heavenly Father, or ought we not rather to accept them with thankfulness, and enjoy with gratitude the advantages and the comforts which his bounty has bestowed upon us? Most assuredly we ought. But then they are to be enjoyed also with innocence, with temperance, and with moderation. They must not be allowed to usurp the first place in our hearts. They must not be permitted to supplant God in our affection, or to dispute that preeminence and priority which he claims over every propensity of our nature. This, and this only, can prevent the good seed from being choked with the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of the present life.

We now come, in the last place, to the seed which fell on good ground, which our

Lord tells us, in St. Luke, denotes those that in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.

We here see that the first and principal qualification for hearing the word of God, for keeping it, for rendering it capable of bringing forth fruit, is *an honest and a good heart;* that is, a heart free from all those evil dispositions and corrupt passions which blind the eyes, distort the understanding, and obstruct the admission of divine truth; a heart perfectly clear from prejudice, from pride, from vanity, from self-sufficiency, and self-conceit; a heart sincerely disposed and earnestly desirous to find out the truth, and firmly resolved to embrace it when found; ready to acknowledge its own ignorance, weakness and corruption, and "to receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save the soul."

This is that innocence and simplicity and singleness of mind which we find so frequently recommended and so highly applauded by our blessed Lord, and which is so beautifully and feelingly described when

young children were brought to him that he should touch them, and were checked by his disciples: "Suffer the little children to come unto me," says he, "and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God;" and then he adds, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Here, in a few words, and by a most significant and affecting emblem, is expressed that temper and disposition of mind which is the most essential qualification for the kingdom of heaven. Unless we come to the Gospel with that meekness, gentleness, docility, and guileless simplicity, which constitute the character of a child, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. For, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble: them that are meek shall he guide in judgment; and such as are gentle, them shall he learn his way."

If we have not from constitution that honest and good heart which is necessary for receiving the good seed, and bringeth forth fruit with patience, we may by degrees, and by the blessing of God, gradually acquire it. If the soil is not originally good,

it may be made so by labour and cultivation; but, above all, by imploring our heavenly Father to shower down upon it the plentiful effusions of his grace, which he has promised to all that devoutly and fervently and constantly pray for it. This dew from heaven, "shed abroad in our hearts," will refresh and invigorate and purify our souls; will correct the very worst disposition; will soften and subdue the hardest and most ungrateful soil; will make it clean and pure and moist, fit for the reception of the good seed; and notwithstanding its original poverty and barrenness, will enrich it with strength and vigour sufficient to bring forth fruit to perfection.

LECTURE XXXIII.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XIII. CONTINUED.

THE parable of the Tares will be the subject of our present consideration. It is as follows: "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came

and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field; from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest whilst ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together unto the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them up in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."

After our Lord had delivered this parable, and one or two more very short ones, we are told that he sent the multitude away, and went into the house; and his disciples came unto him, saying, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man: the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares

are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear."

This parable well deserves our most serious consideration, as it gives an answer to two questions of great curiosity and importance. The first of these questions is, How came moral evil into the world?

The next is, Why is it suffered to remain a single moment; and why is not every wicked man immediately punished as he deserves?

We are told in the very beginning of the Bible, that he who first brought sin or moral evil into the world was that great adversary

of the human race, the devil, who first tempted the woman, and she the man, to act in direct contradiction to the commands of their Maker.

This act of disobedience destroyed at once that innocence and purity and integrity of mind with which they came out of the hands of their Creator; gave an immediate and dreadful shock to their whole moral frame, and introduced into it all those corrupt propensities and disordered passions which were entailed upon their descendants; of which we now all feel the bitter fruits, and have, I fear, by our own personal and voluntary transgressions increased.

This is the true origin of moral evil; and it is expressly confirmed by our Saviour in the parable before us; in which, when the servants of the householder express their surprise at finding tares among the wheat, and ask whence they came, his answer is, *An enemy hath done this;* and that enemy, our Lord informs us, is the devil.

But still, as I have already observed, there remains another very important question to be answered. Why is the wickedness of man, from whatever source it springs, suf-

fered to pass unobserved and unpunished by the Judge of all the earth? Why is not the bold offender stopped short in his career of vice and iniquity? Why is he permitted to go on triumphantly, without any obstacle to his wishes, to insult, oppress, and harass the virtuous and the good, without the least check or control, and, as it were, to brave the vengeance of the Almighty, and set at nought the great Governor of the world? Why, in short, in the language of the parable, are the tares allowed to grow up unmolested with the wheat, to choke its vigour and impede its growth? Why are they not plucked up instantly with an indignant hand, and thrown to the dunghill, or committed to the flames?

The reflections which these mysterious proceedings are apt to excite even in the best and humblest of men, are most intimately expressed by the royal Psalmist in the seventy-third Psalm; where you see all the different turns and workings of his mind laid open without disguise, and all the various ideas and sentiments that successively took possession of his soul, in the progress of his inquiry, described in the most natural

and affecting manner: "Truly," says he, with that piety which constantly inspires him, "God is loving to Israel; even unto such as are of a clean heart: nevertheless my feet were almost gone, my treadings had well nigh slipped: and why? I was grieved at the wicked; I did also see the ungodly in such prosperity; for they are in no peril of death, but are lusty and strong: they come in no misfortune like other folk; neither are they plagued like other men. And this is the cause, that they are so holden with pride and overwhelmed with cruelty: their eyes swell with fatness, and they do even what they lust: they corrupt others, and speak of wicked blasphemy; their talking is against the Most High. Tush, say they, how shall God perceive it? is there knowledge in the Most High? Lo, these are the ungodly: these prosper in the world; and these have riches in possession. And I said, then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."

Sentiments such as these, are, I believe, what many good men have found occasionally rising in their minds, on observing the

prosperity of the worthless part of mankind. These complaints, however, soon pass away with men of pious dispositions, and end in meek submission to the will of Heaven. But not so with the wicked and profane. By them the forbearance of Heaven towards sinners is sometimes perverted to the very worst purposes, and made use of as an argument to encourage and confirm them in the career of vice.

It was to obviate these fatal consequences, as well as to give support and consolation to the good, that our Lord delivered this parable of the tares and the wheat.

But before I begin to state and explain the reasons of that forbearance and lenity towards sinners, I must take notice that, although punishment does not *always* overtake the wicked in this life, yet it falls upon them more frequently and heavily than we are aware of. They are often punished when we do not observe it; but they are also sometimes punished in the most public and conspicuous manner.

The very first offence committed by man after the creation of the world, was, as we know to our cost, followed by immediate

and exemplary punishment. The next great criminal, Cain, was rendered a fugitive and a vagabond upon earth, and held up as an object of execration and abhorrence to mankind. When the whole earth was sunk in wickedness, it was overwhelmed by a deluge: the abominations of Sodom and Gomorrah were avenged by fire from heaven: the tyrant Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea: Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their rebellious companions, were buried alive in the bowels of the earth. It was for their portentous wickedness and savage practices that the Canaanite nations were exterminated by the Israelites; and it was for their idolatries, their licentiousness, and their rebellions against God, that the Israelites themselves were repeatedly driven into exile, reduced to slavery, and at length their city, their temple, and their whole civil polity utterly destroyed, and themselves scattered and dispersed over every part of the known world, and every where treated with derision and contempt.

These are proofs, and tremendous proofs, that God is not an inattentive and uncon-

cerned spectator of human wickedness. And to come to our own times, do we not continually see that they who indulge their passions without control, and give an unbounded loose to every corrupt propensity of their hearts, are sooner or later the victims of their own intemperance and licentiousness? Do they not madly sacrifice to the love of pleasure, and frequently within a very short space of time, their health, their fortune, their characters, their peace of mind, and that too completely and effectually, and beyond all hopes of recovery? Now what is all this but the sentence of God speedily executed against evil works? without taking into the account such flagrant crimes as deliver men over into the hands of public justice.

But supposing the guilty to escape for a time all sufferings, and, in consequence of it, to please themselves highly with the prudence of their choice; yet still punishment, though slow, may overtake them at last. The blindness of such men to consequences is quite astonishing. One man evades the penalties of human laws in a few instances, and therefore concludes he shall

never be overtaken by them. Another preserves his reputation for a time, and thence imagines it to be perfectly secure. A third finds his health hold out a few years, and therefore has not the least suspicion that what he is always undermining must fall at last. There are, however, numbers of worthless and profligate men who go on for a considerable length of time, perhaps even to the end of their days, in a full tide of worldly prosperity, blessed with every thing that is thought most valuable in this life, wealth, power, rank, health, and strength, and enjoying all these advantages without interruption and alloy, "coming in no misfortune like other folk, and not plagued or afflicted like other men."

These, it must be confessed, are strong symptoms of happiness, if we are to judge from appearances only. But does not every one know that happiness depends infinitely less upon external circumstances than on the internal comfort, content, and satisfaction of the mind? "The heart only (says the wise man most truly) knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy." This then is the

standard by which you must measure human happiness. You must not too hastily conclude that prosperity is felicity. In order to know whether these men are truly what they seem to be, you must follow them into their retirements—into their closets and their couches; and if you could then see the interior of their hearts, you would probably find them objects rather of pity than of envy.

External calamities, and corporeal pains, acute sufferings, disease, or death, therefore, are not the only instruments of vengeance which the Almighty has in his hand for the correction of sinners; but he has other engines of punishment far more terrible than these; he can plant daggers in the breast of the most triumphant libertine; and even when their worldly blessings are exalted, his secret dart can pierce their souls, and wring them with tortures sharper than a two-edged sword, yet invisible to every eye.

However as punishment does not always overtake the offence either speedily or immediately, I proceed to show, that when

this is the case, there are sufficient reasons for the delay.

One of these reasons is given in the parable before us. When the servants of the householder represented to him that there was a great number of tares intermixed and growing up with the wheat, and asked whether they should not go and root them up; his answer was, *Nay;* lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up the wheat also with them. The meaning is, that, in the present imperfect scene of things, the virtuous and the wicked are so intermingled and so connected with each other, that it is frequently impossible to punish the guilty without involving the innocent in their sufferings.

Is the criminal, whom you wish to see chastised, a perfectly unconnected, solitary, and isolated being? Has he no wife or children, no relations, no dependents, no persons of any description, that look up to him for protection, support, or assistance? If he has, are you sure that all these persons are as worthless, and as deserving of correction as himself? May they not, on the con-

trary, be as eminent in virtue as he is in wickedness; or at least, may they not be exempt from many of those flagrant sins that call for immediate and exemplary punishment? If so, would you have these innocent, and perhaps excellent persons, involved in the ruin of the great delinquent on whom they entirely depend? Would you have the righteous Governor of the universe make no distinction in the infliction of his punishments? Should we not rather adopt the pathetic language of Abraham, when he is pleading with the Almighty for Sodom and Gomorrah? "Wilt thou slay the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" You see then that there may be the best and most substantial reasons for delaying the punishment of the wicked, and that when *we* are rashly calling out for immediate vengeance, the Judge of all the earth is full of tenderness and pity, and sees the best reasons for respiting even the most notorious offenders.

But besides this, there are other reasons for God's forbearance towards sinners. They are sometimes, as the prophet expresses it,

the rod of his anger. He makes use of them as instruments to chastise each other, or to correct the faults of those who are much better than themselves. And it frequently happens that their punishment is only delayed till they have completely finished the work for which they were raised up, and that then they are made to justify the dispensations of the Almighty by the awful spectacle of a conspicuous and terrifying fall.

There is another very important consideration, which may frequently occasion a delay in punishing even grievous offenders; and that is, the goodness and long-suffering of God, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should have time for repentance. "He is unwilling, therefore, to break the bruised reed, or to quench the smoking flax." He is unwilling to destroy what may still possibly be restored; he is unwilling to extinguish, by severity, the faintest sparks of latent goodness. He sees, in short, that if they have time for reflection, if they have space for repentance, they *will* repent, and he graciously gives them a respite for that purpose.

And shall we repine or murmur at this forbearance, this indulgence of God towards sinners? Are not we ourselves all of us sinners, miserable sinners: and do we think that God treats *us* with too much indulgence? How then can we refuse to others that mercy of which we stand so much in need ourselves?

Yet notwithstanding all the reasons for sometimes delaying the punishment of guilt in the present world, it cannot be denied that there are some instances of prosperous wickedness which cannot well be accounted for by any of them, and therefore we must have recourse to the concluding part of the parable, which will give us the fullest satisfaction on this interesting subject. To the question of the servants, whether they should gather up the tares from the midst of the wheat, the householder answers, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." The harvest, our Lord tells us in

his explanation, is the end of the world, at which awful period the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall "gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Here then is the great master key to the whole of this mysterious dispensation of heaven. God, we see, has appointed a day when every deficiency in his administration shall be supplied, and every seeming disproportion and inequality shall be rectified.

Even in this world it appears that wickedness is punished in some measure, and to a certain degree: and we have seen that the interests of virtue itself, among other considerations, require that it should not be instantly punished to the full extent of its deserts. God is perpetually showing, even in the present life, his different regard to right and wrong, by every such method as the constitution of the world which he has created admits; and therefore no sooner

shall that world come to an end, and all obstacles to an equal administration of justice be taken out of the way, than he shall come to execute righteous judgment upon earth. "He is not slack, as men count slackness," that is, negligent and remiss; he only waits for the proper season of doing all that hitherto remains undone. We must not think God to be such a one as ourselves. Eternity itself will make no change in *his* abhorrence of wickedness, nor will any thing either transport him to act before his appointed time, or prevail upon him to give a respite when that time comes. The sinners of the antediluvian world, abusing the long space of one hundred and twenty years which he allowed for their repentance, perished at the end of it without mercy. The angels who fell from their first estate, before this world was created, he has reserved for torments, that shall not finally take place till it is consumed.

How far off these judgments of the Lord may be, we none of us know. But with regard to ourselves, they are near, they are even at the door. The few days we have to pass in this transient scene will determine

our condition for ever, and bring us into an eternal state, compared with which the continuance of the present frame of nature, from its very beginning, will be as nothing. Then every act of the government of God will be seen in its true light; the imagined length of distance between guilt and its punishment will totally disappear; and offenders will lament in vain that sentence is executed so *speedily* as it is against evil works.

To the religious and virtuous we say, "Fret not thyself because of the ungodly, neither be thou envious against the evil doers. Hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently upon him; but grieve not thyself at him whose way doth prosper, against the man that doeth after evil counsels. Wicked doers shall be rooted out; and they that patiently abide the Lord, those shall inherit the land."

It has been proved, in the course of this inquiry, that in such an immense and complicated system as that of the universe, there are many reasons which we can discern, and a thousand others perhaps totally unknown to us, which render it necessary that

the virtuous should suffer a temporary depression, and the wicked enjoy a temporary triumph. But let not these apparent irregularities dispirit or discourage us: for whenever the purposes of Providence in these mysterious dispensations shall have been accomplished, every disorder shall be rectified, and every appearance of injustice done away. The time and the season for doing this, God has reserved in his own power; and we must not presume to prescribes rules to the wisdom of the Almighty. To men excruciated with pain, every moment seems an age; and to men groaning under oppression, their deliverance, if it come not instantly, may seem extremely distant. But let them not despair: in due season they shall reap, if they faint not. At the period marked out by infinite wisdom, and which it is their duty to await with patience, God shall cause his judgment to be heard from heaven, and the earth shall tremble and be still. He shall prove, in a manner the most awful and most satisfactorily, "that verily there is a reward for the righteous, and a punishment for the wicked; that doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

LECTURE XXXIV.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVII.

I REQUEST your attention to a very remarkable part of our Saviour's history, that which is called by the evangelists his *Transfiguration*, and which is related in the seventeenth chapter of St. Matthew.

The relation of this singular transaction is given us by three out of four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and alluded to in the writings of the fourth. They all agree in the main points. There is no material variation, and not the least contradiction between them: but, as it is very natural, where different persons relate the same fact, a few particulars are taken notice of by some which are passed over in silence by others. St. Matthew's account of it s as follows:

"And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth

them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mount, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias shall truly first come, and

restore all things, But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed: likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake to them of John the Baptist."

Such is the history which the evangelist gives us of the transfiguration.

I conceive two principal and important purposes were meant to be answered by this illustrious scene.

The first was to set before the eyes of the disciples a *visible and figurative representation of Christ's coming in glory to judge the world, and to reward with everlasting felicity all his faithful servants.*

In order to prove this, and at the same time to bring to the reader's view those circumstances which preceded, and in some degree gave occasion to the celestial vision, it will be necessary to look back to the chapter immediately before that in which the transfiguration is related.

In the twenty-first verse of the sixteenth chapter we find that Jesus then, for the first time, thought fit to give some intimations to

his disciples of the strange and extraordinary scenes he was soon to pass through; his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection.

"From that time forth began Jesus to show to his disciples how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

He thus proceeded to show, not only that he himself must suffer persecution, but that all those who would at that time come after him, and share with him the arduous and dangerous task of sowing the first seeds of the Gospel, "must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow him." But then, to support them under those severe injunctions, he cheers them immediately with a brighter scene of things, and with a prospect of *his* future glory, and *their* future recompense. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works." And he adds, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." The evident tendency of the whole passage

is to prepare the minds of his disciples for the cruel treatment which both he and they were to undergo, and at the same time to raise their drooping spirits, by setting before their eyes his own exaltation, and their glorious rewards in another life.

Within a few days after the foregoing conversation, he "taketh with him Peter, James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and behold, there appeared Moses and Elias talking with him." They were not only *seen* by the disciples, but they were *heard* also conversing with Jesus. St. Luke says that "they spake of our Lord's decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The very *mention* of Christ's sufferings and death by such men as Moses and Elias, without any marks of surprise or dissatisfaction, was of itself sufficient to occasion a great change in the sentiments of the disciples respecting those sufferings, and to soften those prejudices of theirs against them; the removal of which seems to have been one of the more immediate objects of the transfiguration.

From the expressions made use of by the

several evangelists, the change in the whole of our Lord's external appearance was a very illustrious one. They inform us that, "as our Saviour prayed, the fashion of his countenance was changed; his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became exceeding white and glistering; as white as snow, as white as the light, so as no fuller on earth could whiten it." Now Christ having assumed this splendid and glorious appearance at the very time when Moses and Elias were conversing with him on his sufferings, it was a *visible* and striking proof to his disciples that those sufferings were not, as they imagined, any real discredit and disgrace to him, but were perfectly consistent with the dignity of his character, and the highest state of glory to which he could be exalted.

The transfiguration is described in nearly the same terms that St. John, in the Revelation, applies to the Son of man in his *state of glory* in heaven. "He was clothed," says he, "with a garment down to the foot: his head and his hair were white like wool, white as snow; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." It is re-

markable that St. Luke calls his appearance, after being transfigured, *his glory*.

St. John, who was likewise present at this appearance, gives it the same name. "We beheld *his glory*, as of the only begotten of the Father." And St. Peter, who was another witness to this transaction on the mount, refers to it by a similar expression. "For he received," says that Apostle, "from God the Father, *honour and glory*, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There can hardly therefore remain any doubt, but that *the glory which Christ received from the Father* on the mountain, was meant to be a representation of his coming *in the glory of his Father*, with his holy angels, at the end of the world.

Though our Saviour's resurrection is only indirectly alluded to here, yet those most important doctrines which are founded upon it, *a general resurrection, and a day of retribution*, are expressly represented in the transfiguration.

In the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew Christ tells his disciples that, when "he

comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, he will reward every man according to his works:" from whence it necessarily follows that every man who is dead shall rise from the grave. And in confirmation of both these truths, there are two just and righteous men, Moses and Elias, who had many years before departed out of the world, brought back to it again, and represented in a state of glory. That they actually appeared in their own proper persons there is not the least reason to doubt. Though the sepulchre of Moses was not known, yet his body was actually buried in a valley in the land of Moab, and therefore must have seen corruption; and as the whole transaction was miraculous, it was easy to Omnipotence to restore life and form to a body mouldered into dust, and by doing so give an exact emblem of our own resurrection. And Elias having been carried up into heaven without undergoing death, he was here a proper representative of those who should be found *alive* at the day of judgment, as Moses is of those who had died, and are raised to life again. And

his appearance a second time on earth must have been a convincing proof to the disciples of the possibility of a resurrection.

And, what is no less important, the *manner*, in which both Moses and Elias appeared on this occasion, afforded the disciples an ocular demonstration of *a day of retribution* agreeably to what their divine Master had a few days before told them, *that he would reward every man according to his works.*

We are informed that both Moses and Elias appeared also in *glory*. The *glory of Christ* therefore on the mountain was a symbol of his exaltation to be the judge of the earth; and the *glory of Moses and Elias* was an emblem of the rewards given to the righteous in heaven; and one great object of this expressive action, as well as of that conversation, was to reconcile the minds of his disciples to the sufferings which both he and they were to undergo by showing that they were preparatory and subservient to *his* future glory and *their* future rewards.

The other great purpose of the action on the mount was, I apprehend, to signify, in

a figurative manner, the cessation of the Jewish and the commencement of the Christian dispensation.

It appears to have been one prevailing prejudice among the disciples that the whole Mosaical law, the ceremonial as well as the moral, was to continue in full force under the Gospel; and that the authority of Moses and the prophets was not, in any respect, to give way on the establishment of Christianity, but to be placed on an equal footing with that of Christ.

To correct this erroneous opinion, no less than to vanquish their prepossessions against the sufferings of Christ, was the scene of the transfiguration presented to the three chosen disciples, Peter, James, and John.

Moses and Elias were very natural and proper representatives of the *law* and the *prophets*.

When the three disciples saw these illustrious persons conversing familiarly with Jesus, it probably confirmed them in their opinion, that they were to be considered as of *equal* dignity and authority with him; and under this impression, Peter immediately addressed himself to Jesus, and said, "Lord,

it is good for us to be here; and, if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; meaning to say, let this be the constant place of your abode, that we may always continue under the UNITED EMPIRE of our three illustrious lords and masters, whose sovereign laws and commands we are *equally* bound to obey.

The answer to this extraordinary proposal was instantly given both by action and by words. "While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: HEAR YE HIM.

The CLOUD is the well known token of the divine presence under the law: the gracious words which issued from it most clearly explained the meaning of what was passing before the eyes of the disciples, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: HEAR YE HIM." "This is my *Son*, not as Moses and all the prophets were, my *servants*. HIM, and him only, you are now to hear. He is from henceforth to be your lord, your legislator, and your king. The

evangelical law being established, the ceremonial law must cease, and MOSES and the PROPHETS must give way to CHRIST." Moses and Elias instantly disappear, and "when the disciples lift up their eyes, they see no man save Jesus only." The former objects of their veneration are no more. Christ remains *alone* their unrivalled and undisputed sovereign.

From the whole, then, of the preceding observations, it appears, that the transfiguration of Christ was one of those emblematical actions, or figurative representations, of which so many instances have been pointed out, and distinctly explained by some of our best divines.

The things represented by this significant transaction were:

First, The future glory of Christ, a general resurrection, and a future retribution.

Secondly, The abrogation of the Mosaical, and the establishment of the evangelical dispensation.

And the *immediate* purpose of these representations was, as I before observed, to correct two inveterate prejudices which prevailed among the disciples, and the Jewish converts in general.

Of these, one was the extreme offence they took at the mention of the death and sufferings of Christ, which they conceived to be utterly inconsistent with his dignity.

The other was their persuasion that the ceremonial law was not done away by the Gospel, but that they were to exist together in full force, and to have an equal obedience paid to them by all the disciples of Christ.

But though the removal of these prejudices was, perhaps, the primary and immediate design of the transfiguration; yet there are also purposes of great utility to all Christians in general, in every age, which it probably was intended to answer.

In the first place, it affords one more additional proof of the divine mission of Christ, and the divine authority of his religion.

It is one of the few occasions on which God himself was pleased, as it were, *personally to interpose,* and to make an open declaration from heaven in favour of his Son; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."

Now these signs from heaven may be considered *as a distinct species of evidence*, different both from miracles and prophecies,

frequently and earnestly wished for by the Jews, but not granted to them, nor vouchsafed to any one, but very sparingly, and on great and solemn occasions.

But besides this awful testimony to the divine origin of our religion in general, a particular attestation was given on the Mount to two of its principal doctrines, A GENERAL RESURRECTION and A DAY OF RETRIBUTION.

The visible and illustrious representations of these in the glorified appearance of Christ, and Moses, and Elias, is appealed to by St. Peter, who saw it, as one convincing proof, among others, that "he had not followed cunningly devised fables," when he made known "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, indeed, since these two doctrines, A RESURRECTION, and A DAY OF JUDGMENT, are two of the most essential and fundamental articles of our faith; and since it was one of the chief purposes of the Christian revelation "to bring life and immortality to light," no wonder that God should graciously condescend to confirm these great truths to us in so many various ways; by words and by actions, by prophecies, by miracles, and by celestial visions.

LECTURE XXXV.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XVIII.

The subject of this Lecture is a part of the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew.

In the beginning of this chapter it appears that the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" It appears from the parallel passage in St. Mark, that they had been disputing by the way who should be the greatest. Our Lord, knowing this, and finding that all he had said on this subject had produced no effect upon them, determined to try whether a different mode of conveying his sentiments might not strike their minds more forcibly. He had recourse (as in the case of the transfiguration) to what may be called a visible kind of language. He took a little child, and placing him before them, bid them contemplate the innocence and simplicity, the meekness and humility, which marked its countenance; and then assured

them, that unless they were converted, and became as little children; that is, unless a total change took place in the temper and disposition of their minds, unless they became as unambitious and unaspiring, as meek, as humble and contented, as little concerned about worldly honours and distinctions, as the child before them, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven; they could never be considered as true objects of Christ's kingdom here, or be capable of inheriting the rewards of heaven hereafter.

In the eye of God, true humility is a most sublime virtue; and whoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord then goes on to say, "Whosoever receiveth one such little child in my name, receiveth me." That is, it is men of humble minds and meek dispositions whom I most highly prize, and whom I most strongly recommend to the notice, the kindness, the protection of all those who are friends to me and my religion: and so dear are persons of this description to me, that I make their interests my own, and I shall

consider every man who receives and assists and encourages them on my account, and for my sake, as receiving me. But if, instead of receiving and protecting these my humble disciples, any one should dare to injure them, he must expect the severest marks of my displeasure. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world, because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

In order to comprehend the full meaning of this denunciation, it will be necessary to explain the peculiar meaning of the word *offend*. Now this expression in the present passage, as well as in many other parts of the New Testament, signifies to cause any one *to fall from his faith*, to renounce his belief in Christ by any means whatever; and against every one that makes use either of violence or artifice to terrify or seduce the sincere and humble and unsuspicious believer in Christ from his faith and obedience

to his divine Master, the severest woes, and the heaviest punishments are here denounced.

This text of Scripture, therefore, I would most earnestly recommend to the serious consideration of those who either are or have been guilty of this most dangerous crime; and I would also no less earnestly caution all those who have not yet been guilty of it, to avoid, with the utmost care, every degree of it, and every approach to it. I shall advert briefly to the several modes of *making our brother to offend*, that is, to renounce his faith in Christ, which are most common and most successful; and these are, persecution, sophistry, ridicule, immoral examples, and immoral publications.

With respect to the first of these, persecution, it was, during the first ages of the Gospel, and for many years after the Reformation, the great *rock of offence*, the chief instrument made use of to deter men from embracing the faith of Christ, or to compel them to renounce it.

In our own country, it must be acknowledged, we now cannot justly be charged with this species of guilt. Intolerance and

persecution are certainly not in the number of our national sins. But in the next mode of making our brother to offend, that is, by grave argument and reason, by open and systematic attacks on the truth and divine authority of the Christian revelation, in this we have, I fear, a large load of responsibility upon our heads. But thanks be to God that he gave a sudden and effectual check to the progress of this mischief, and afforded a striking proof of the truth of that prophecy respecting the stability of our religion, "that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it."

The next great engine of offence, by which multitudes have been led to renounce their faith, is *ridicule;* by no one has this weapon been employed with more force and success than by the great patriarch of infidelity, Voltaire. His writings have unquestionably produced more infidels among the higher classes, and spread more general corruption over the world, than all the voluminous productions of all the other philosophists of Europe put together.

There is still another way of making our brother to *offend,* or in other words, of shaking

his faith in the Gospel; and that is, by exhibiting to mankind in our life and conversation, a profligate example.

This, in the first place, gives the world an unfavourable idea of the religion we profess; and, in the next place, a wicked example tends to corrupt, in some degree, every one that lives within its baneful influence.

A dissolute life, especially in particular classes of men, is one certain way of making our brother to offend, not only in point of practice, but of belief; and there is another method of producing the same effects, nearly allied to this, and that is *immoral publications.*

These have the same tendency with bad examples, both in propagating vice and promoting infidelity; but they are still more pernicious, because the sphere of their influence is more extensive. A licentious publication is peculiarly fatal to the unsuspecting and unguarded minds of the youth of both sexes; to them its "breath is poison, and its touch is death."

These are the several modes in which we may weaken or even destroy the moral and religious principles of very sincere Christians,

or, in the words of Scripture, *may make our brother to offend.* And whoever is guilty of *giving* this offence, ought most seriously to consider the heavy punishment, and the bitter woe, which our Lord here denounces against it: "Whoso shall *offend* one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." These are tremendous words; but we cannot wonder that our Lord should express himself thus strongly, when we consider the dreadful consequences of spreading infidelity and immorality among our fellow creatures.

Every father of a family should be careful too that nothing escape his lips, in the unguarded hour of familiar converse, that can be dangerous to the religious principles of his children, his friends, or his servants: even the friends of religion are sometimes apt, through mere inadvertence or thoughtlessness, to indulge themselves in pleasantries, even upon serious subjects, which, though

meant at the time merely to entertain their hearers, or to display their wit, yet often produce a very different effect, and sink much deeper into the minds of those that are present (especially of young people) than they are in the least aware of. More mischief may sometimes be done by incidental levities of this kind, than by grave discourses or elaborate writings against religion.

I proceed with the remaining part of our Lord's admonition to his disciples.

After having said, in the seventh verse, "Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh:" he then adds, "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee cut them off, and cast them from thee, it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire; and if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."

You must go at once to the root of the evil, you must extirpate those corrupt pas-

sions and propensities that have taken possession of your hearts, though it may be as difficult for you to part with them as it would be to pluck out an eye, or tear off a limb from the body. For it is better that you should renounce what is most dear to you in this life, than that you should suffer those dreadful punishments in the next, which I have told you will assuredly be inflicted on all impenitent offenders, and more particularly on those who offend in the way here specified.

Jesus then goes on to exemplify, by a familiar similitude, his paternal tenderness to the sons of men:—"How think ye, if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains and seek that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine that went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish." We are not to infer from this similitude that God sets more value, and looks with more complacency and approbation on one re-

penting sinner than on ninety and nine righteous persons who have uniformly and devoutly served him. This can never be imagined; nor could it correspond with the illustration. The shepherd himself does not set a greater value upon the lost sheep than he does upon those that are safe; nor would he give up them to recover that which has strayed. But his joy *for the moment*, at the recovery of the lost sheep, is greater than he receives from all the rest, because he has regained that, and is sure of all the others. The whole, therefore, that was meant to be inculcated by this parable is, that God's parental tenderness extends to all, even to the sinner that goes astray; and that he rejoices at the conversion and recovery of the meanest individual, and of the most grievous offender. This is the very conclusion, and the only one, which our Lord himself draws from the parable. "Even so it is not the will of your Father, which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Such then being the mercy of the Almighty, even to his sinful creatures, our

Lord goes on to intimate to his disciples, that *they* ought also to exercise a similar lenity and forbearance towards their offending brethren. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." This passage is an allusion to the laws and customs of the Jews; but the obvious meaning in regard to ourselves is, that even against those who have ill treated and injured us, we should not immediately proceed to extreme severity and rigour; but first try the effects of private, and gentle, and friendly admonition; if that fail, then call in two or three persons of character and reputation, to add weight and authority to our remonstrances; and if that has no effect, we are then justified in bringing the offender before the proper tribunal, to be censured or

punished as he deserves, avoiding all communication with him in future, except what common humanity may require even towards an enemy.

We now come to one of the most interesting and most affecting parables that are to be found in Scripture. In consequence of what our Lord had said on the subject of *injuries*, Peter came to him, and said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus saith unto him, "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" that is, this duty of forgiving injuries has no limits. However frequently you are injured, if real penitence and contrition follow the offence, a Christian is always bound to forgive. To illustrate and confirm this important duty, our Lord subjoins the parable of the unforgiving servant. The object of this parable is not only to enforce the duty of cultivating a placable disposition, but a disposition *constantly* placable, always ready to forgive the offences of our brother, however frequently he may repeat those offences. For it was immediately after our Lord had told Peter that he was to forgive his brother

not merely seven times, but seventy times seven, that he added this parable to confirm that very doctrine; *therefore,* says he, is the kingdom of heaven like unto a certain king, &c. But then it is only upon this condition, that the offender is sincerely penitent, and entreats forgiveness.

In the next place, I would remark that this parable is a practical comment on that petition in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us:" and it shows what infinite stress our Divine Master lays on this duty of forgiveness, by the care he takes to enforce it in so many different ways, by this parable, by making it a part of our daily prayers, and by his repeated declarations that we must expect no mercy from our Maker, "unless we from our hearts forgive every one his brother their trespasses."

And yet it is dreadful to state what very little regard is paid to this precept by a large part of mankind.

No man, I believe, ever heard or read the parable alluded to, without feeling his indignation rise against the ungrateful and unfeeling servant, who, after having a debt

of ten thousand talents remitted to him by his indulgent lord, threw his fellow servant into prison for a debt of a hundred pence: and yet how frequently are we ourselves guilty of the very same offence?

Do we not every day see men resenting not only real injuries, but slight, and even imaginary offences? Do we not even see families rent asunder, and all domestic tranquillity and comfort destroyed, frequently by the most trivial causes, sometimes on one side, and sometimes on both, refusing to listen to any reasonable overtures of peace, haughtily rejecting all offers of reconciliation, and carrying their implacable rancour with them to the grave?

But let every man of this description remember, and most seriously reflect on this parable; let him remember that the unfortunate servant was delivered over to the tormentors till he should pay the uttermost farthing. Let him recollect that all the world approves this sentence; that he himself cannot but approve it; that he cannot but feel himself to be precisely in the situation of that very servant, and that of course he must, at the last tremendous day,

expect that bitter and unanswerable reproach from his offended Judge, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

LECTURE XXXVI.

MATTHEW, CHAPTER XIX.

THE present Lecture is a part of the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew, beginning at the sixteenth verse.

"Behold," says the evangelist, "one came and said unto him (meaning Jesus), Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, which? Jesus said, thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness. Honour thy father and thy mother: and thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." It is observable that our Lord does not recite *all* the ten commandments, but only five out of those that compose what is called the second table. Now we cannot imagine that Jesus meant to say that the observation of a *few* of God's commands would put the young man in possession of eternal life. His intention unquestionably was, by a very common figure of speech, to make a part stand for the whole; and instead of enumerating *all* the commandments, to specify only a few, which were to represent the rest. Nor does he only include in his injunction the ten commandments, but *all* the moral commandments of God contained in the law of Moses; for he mentions one which is not to be found in the ten commandments, "Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The young man saith unto him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" To repress the imaginations of his perfections, which Jesus saw rising in his mind, he replied, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." The young man made no reply; he could not. He saw all his pretensions to *perfection*, his hopes of an extraordinary reward, vanish at once. He was not disposed to purchase even treasure in heaven at the price of all he possessed on earth. He therefore went away silent and sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Our Lord thus convinced him that he was very far from that exalted state of piety and virtue to which he pretended, and that if he was rewarded with eternal life, it must not be in consequence of his own righteousness, but of the mercy of God, and the merits of a Redeemer, as yet unknown to him.

Our Saviour's command does not, in its primary meaning, relate to Christians of the

present times; nor indeed to Christians at all, properly speaking, but to those who were at *that time* desirous of becoming so.

But though in a strict and literal sense it cannot be applied to ourselves, yet in its principle and in its general import, it conveys a most useful and most important lesson to Christians in every age and in every nation; it is an admonition to them not to pique themselves too much on their exact obedience to all the divine commands, not to assume to themselves so much perfection as to found upon it a *right* and a *claim* to eternal life; not to rely solely on their own righteousness, but on the merits of their Redeemer, for acceptance and salvation. It reminds them also, that they ought always to be prepared to yield an implicit obedience to the commands of their Maker; and that if their duty to him should at any time require it, they should not hesitate to renounce their dearest interests and most favourite pleasures; to part with fame, with fortune, and even life itself; and under all circumstances to consider, in the first place, what it is that God requires at their hands, and to submit to it, whatever it may cost them, without a murmur.

After this conversation with the young ruler, follows the observation made by our Lord on this remarkable incident. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When his disciples heard it they were amazed, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The first thing to be remarked is, that although the similitude here made use of, that of a camel passing through the eye of a needle, implies absolute impossibility, yet, according to every rule of interpreting oriental proverbs, it means only in its application, *great difficulty;* and is plainly so interpreted by our Lord, when he says that a rich man shall *hardly* enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Those rich men only are meant who *trust* in their riches, who place their whole dependance upon them; whose views and hopes are centred in them, and them only; who place their whole happiness, not in relieving the distresses of the poor, and sooth-

ing the sorrows of the afflicted, not in acts of worship and adoration and thanksgiving to Him, from whose bounty they derive every blessing they enjoy; not in giving him their hearts, and dedicating their wealth to his glory and his service; but in amassing it without end, or squandering it without any benefit to mankind, in making it the instrument of pleasure, of luxury, of dissipation, of vice, and the means of gratifying every irregular appetite and passion without control. These are the rich men whose salvation is represented by our Saviour to be almost impossible; and yet even with respect to these he adds, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible; that is, although if we look to human means, to human strength alone, it seems utterly impossible that such men as these should ever repent and be saved; yet to the power of God, to the overruling influences of the Holy Spirit, nothing is impossible. His grace shed abroad in the heart may touch it with compunction and remorse, may awaken it to penitence, may heal all its corruptions, may illuminate, may purify, may sanctify it, may bring the most worldly

minded man to a sense of his condition, and make him transfer his trust from riches to THE LIVING GOD.

It is then to those that *trust* in riches that this denunciation of our Lord peculiarly applies; but even to *all rich men in general* it holds out this most important admonition, that their situation is at the best a situation of difficulty and danger; that their riches furnish them with so many opportunities of indulging every wayward wish, every corrupt propensity of their hearts, and spread before them so many temptations, so many incitements, so many provocations to luxury, intemperance, sensuality, pride, forgetfulness of God, and contempt of every thing serious and sacred, that it is too much for human nature to bear; that they have therefore peculiar need to take heed to their ways, to watch incessantly over their own conduct, to keep their hearts with all diligence, to guard the issues of life and death, and, above all, to implore with unceasing earnestness and fervour that help from above, those communications of divine grace, which can alone enable them to overcome the world, and to vanquish all the powerful

enemies they have to contend with. They have, in short, their way plainly marked out to them in Scripture, and the clearest directions given them how they are to conduct themselves so as to become *partakers of everlasting life*. "Charge them (says St. Paul) that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

This striking charge to the rich is full of most important and wholesome advice. It cautions the rich men of the world not to *trust* in uncertain riches, but they are enjoined to place their trust in THE LIVING GOD. Those riches, which are their natural enemies, must be converted into allies and friends. These must, as the Scripture expresses it, make to themselves "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" they must be rich towards God; they must turn that wealth, which is too often the cause of their

perdition, into an instrument of salvation, into an *instrument* by which they may *lay hold*, as the apostle expresses it, on eternal life.

Jesus then goes on to say, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." It is plain that the reward, whatever it might be, was to be bestowed in the *present world;* besides which they were to inherit everlasting life.

What then, it may be asked, is this recompense, which was to take place in the present life, and was to be an *hundred fold?* It is that internal content and satisfaction of mind, that peace of God which passeth all understanding, those delights of a pure conscience and an upright heart, that affectionate support of all good men, those consolations of the Holy Spirit, that trust and confidence in God, that consciousness of the divine favour and approbation, those reviving hopes of everlasting glory, which every good man and sincere Christian never fails to experience in the discharge of his duty.

These are the things which will cheer his heart and sustain his spirits amidst all the discouragements he meets with, under the pressure of want, of poverty, affliction, of calumny, of ridicule, of persecution, and even under the terrors of death itself, which will recompense him *an hundred fold* for all the sacrifices he has made to Christ and his religion, and impart to him a degree of comfort and tranquillity and happiness far beyond any thing that all the wealth and splendour of this world can bestow.

Here then we have a full explanation of our Lord's promise in the passage before us. that every one who had forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his name's sake, should receive an hundred fold, should receive abundant recompense in the comfort of their own minds, as described in the corresponding passage of St. Paul, which may be considered not only as an admirable comment on our Lord's declaration, but as an exact fulfilment of the prediction contained in it. For that declaration is plainly prophetic; it foretells the persecution his disciples would meet with in the discharge

of their duty; and foretells, also, that in the midst of these persecutions they would be undaunted and joyful. And there cannot be a more perfect completion of any prophecy than that which St. Paul's description sets before us with respect to this.

But we must not confine this promise of our Saviour's to his own immediate followers and disciples; it extends to all his faithful servants in every age and nation in the world, that part with any thing that is dear and valuable to them for the sake of the Gospel.

Whoever has passed any time in the world must have seen that every man who is sincere in the profession of his religion, who sets God always before him, and who seeks above all things his favour and approbation, must sometimes make great and painful sacrifices to the commands of his Maker and Redeemer; and whoever does so, whoever gives up his pleasures, his interests, his fame, his favourite pursuits, his fondest wishes, and his strongest passions, for the sake of his duty, and in conformity to the will of his heavenly Father, may rest assured that he shall in no wise lose his reward. He shall, in a

degree proportioned to the self-denial he has exercised, and the sufferings he has undergone, experience the present comfort and support promised to the apostles; and shall also, though not to the same extent, have an extraordinary recompense in the kingdom of heaven.

Let no one then be deterred from persevering in the path of duty, whatever discouragements, difficulties, or obstructions he may meet with in his progress, either from the struggles he has from his own corrupt affections, or from the malevolence of the world. Let him not fear to encounter what he must expect to meet with, opposition, contumely, contempt, and ridicule; let him not fear the enmity of profligate and unprincipled men, but let him go on undaunted and undismayed in that uniform tenour of piety and benevolence, of purity, integrity, and uprightness of conduct, which will not fail to bring him peace at the last. Let him not be surprised or alarmed if he is not exempt from the common lot of every sincere and zealous Christian; if he finds it by his own experience to be true what an apostle of Christ had long since prepared

him to expect, that whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall, in some way or other, *suffer persecution:* but let him remember at the same time the reviving and consolatory declaration of his divine Master, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven."

LECTURE XXXVII.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVI.

The twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew will be the subject of the present Lecture, and it begins with informing us, that two days before the great feast of the Passover the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled together unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him.

A remarkable occurrence in this chapter

is the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper by our Saviour, when he was eating the Passover with his disciples.

The Passover was one of the most solemn and sacred feasts of the Jews. It was so called because it was established in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt, at which time the destroying angel, when he put to death the firstborn of the Egyptians, *passed over* the houses of the Israelites, which were all marked with the blood of the lamb that had been killed and eaten the evening before in every Hebrew house, and was therefore called the *Paschal Lamb.*

This great festival our Saviour observed with his disciples the evening before he suffered, and with them ate the paschal lamb, which was a prophetic type of himself: for he was the *real* paschal lamb that was sacrificed for the sins of men. He was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the lamb without blemish and without spot, as the paschal lamb was ordered to be. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the paschal lamb of the Jews was meant to be an emblem of our Lord. The slaying of

that lamb prefigured the slaying of Christ upon the cross; and as those houses which were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb were passed over by the destroying angel, so they whose souls are sprinkled with the blood of Christ are saved from destruction, and their sins *passed over* and forgiven for his sake: and it is a very remarkable circumstance that our Saviour was crucified, and our deliverance from the bondage of sin completed, in the same month, and on the same day of the month, that the Israelites were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, by their departure from that land. For the Israelites went out of Egypt, and Christ was put to death, on the fifteenth day of the month Nisan.

I have premised thus much respecting the passover and the paschal lamb, because it will throw considerable light on the true nature and meaning of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which Jesus now instituted, and of which the evangelist gives the following account:—"When the even was come, our Lord sat down with the twelve to eat the passover; and as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and

gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This is the whole of the institution of the sacred rite by our blessed Lord, as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel; and nothing can be more evident than that when he brake the bread, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat, this is my body;" he meant to say that the bread was to represent his body, and the breaking of it was to represent the breaking of his body upon the cross. In the same manner, when he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament (or New Covenant) which is shed for many for the remission of sins;" his meaning was, that the wine in the cup was to be a representation of his blood that was shed upon the cross as an expiation and atonement for the sins of the whole world. And his disciples were to eat the bread, and drink the wine so consecrated, and so appropriated to this particular pur-

pose, in grateful remembrance of what our Lord suffered for their salvation, and that of all mankind; for St. Luke adds these affecting and impressive words of our Saviour, *This do in remembrance of me.*

The Lord's Supper therefore was evidently to be a solemn commemoration and recognition of the redemption and deliverance of mankind by the death of Christ, as the feast of the passover was of the deliverance of the Israelites from the destroying angel.

The Jews would see that this Supper of our Lord was from that time to be substituted in the room of the passover; and that they might have no doubt on this head, our Lord expressly declares that this was to be the case; for, immediately after the institution of this Sacrament, he adds, "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it *new* with you in my Father's kingdom." The meaning is, that this is the last time that this supper shall be a representation of the passover. The shadow passes away, the substance takes place; and when you eat this supper in remembrance of me, then will

I be virtually present among you, and your souls shall be nourished and refreshed by my grace, as your bodies are by the bread and wine.

I only observe further, that whoever reads with attention this first institution of the Lord's Supper, whoever reflects that it was the last meal that our Lord ate with his disciples, that the next day he underwent for our sakes a most excruciating and ignominious death, and that he requires us to receive this Sacrament *in remembrance of him;* whoever, I say, can, notwithstanding all this, disobey the last command of his dying Redeemer, must be destitute not only of all the devout sentiments of a Christian, but of all the honest feelings of a man.

Our Lord and his apostles, after having kept the passover, went into the mount of Olives; and as they went, Jesus saith unto them, "All ye shall be *offended* because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." This was a prophetic warning to his disciples, that they would all be terrified by

the dangers that awaited him, and would desert and virtually renounce him that very night. But to console and support them under this trial, our Lord assures them that he would rise again from the dead, and after his resurrection would meet them at a certain place he appointed in Galilee.

We are now arrived at a very awful and somewhat mysterious part of our Saviour's history, his agony in the garden.

"Then cometh Jesus with them to a place called Gethsemene; and he said unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him, into a retired part of the garden, Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, the very same disciples who accompanied him at his transfiguration, that they who had been witnesses of his glory might be witnesses also of his humiliation and affliction. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, (that is, if it be possible for man to be saved, and thy glory promoted as effectually in

any other way as by my death) let this cup, this bitter cup of affliction, pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto his disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? you who so lately made such vehement professions of attachment to me! Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Ye have need to watch and pray for your own sakes, as well as mine, that you may not be overcome by the severe trials that await you, nor be tempted to desert me. Yet at the same moment, feeling for the infirmity of human nature, he adds, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." That is, I know your hearts are right, and your intentions good; but the weakness of your frail nature overpowers your best resolutions, "and the thing which ye would ye do not." "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed

the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on *now* and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold *he* is at hand that doth betray me." That is, henceforth you may take your rest; your watching can be of no further use to me; my trial is over, my agony is subdued, and my destiny determined. I shall soon be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, therefore, let us go and meet this danger. Behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

This is the account given us of what is called our Saviour's agony in the garden; in the nature and circumstances of which there is certainly something "difficult to be understood;" but it is at the same time replete with instruction and consolation to every disciple of Christ.

We may observe that the terror and distress of our Lord's mind on this occasion seems to have been extreme, and the agony he endured, in the highest degree poignant and acute. He is said here to be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." St. Mark

adds that he was "sore amazed and very heavy;" and St. Luke tells us, that, "being in agony, he prayed most earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." To what cause could these uncommonly painful sensations be owing?

Whatever these causes might be, the agonizing distresses he experienced clearly prove that there never was "a sorrow, in every respect, like unto his sorrow." It is evident, indeed, that there was some other cause of his agony beside that of his approaching death; for it is said in the epistle to the Hebrews, that he was *heard in that he feared;* that is, he was delivered from the terrors that oppressed him; and yet he knew he was *not* delivered from the *death of the cross.*

This remarkable event presents to us instructions the most edifying, and reflections the most consolatory, to the weakness of our nature.

We see that our Lord did not pretend to that unfeeling heroism, that total insensibility to pain and affliction, which some of the ancient philosophers affected. On the

contrary, in his human nature he felt like a man; he felt the weight of his own sorrows, and dropped the tear of sympathy for those of others. To those, therefore, who are oppressed and bowed down (as the best of men sometimes are) with a load of grief; who find, as the Psalmist expresses it, "their flesh and their heart failing," and their spirit sinking within them, it must be a most reviving consideration to reflect that in this state even of extreme depression, there is no guilt; that it is no mark of God's displeasure; that even his beloved Son was no stranger to it; that he was a man of sorrows, and well acquainted with grief; that therefore he is not a hard, unfeeling, obdurate master, who cannot be touched with our infirmities, but one who was in all things tried and afflicted as we are, yet without sin." He knows what sorrow is; he knows how hard it sometimes presses even on the firmest minds; and he will not fail to extend that relief to others for which even he himself applied with so much fervency to the Father of all.

From his example, too, on this occasion, we learn what conduct we ought to observe

when distress and misery overtake us. We are not only allowed, but encouraged by what *he* did, to put up our petitions to the throne of grace for help in time of need. We are permitted to pray for the removal of our calamities with earnestness and with fervour; we may implore the Almighty that the bitter cup of affliction may pass away from us; but the conclusion must always be (what his was) "not my will, O my Father, but thine be done." And one thing we may be assured of, that if the evils which overwhelm us are not removed, yet our supplications shall not be in vain; we shall at the least be enabled to bear them. And though we must not expect to have an angel sent from heaven to support us, as was done to Jesus, yet we may expect, and expect with confidence, that a more angelic comforter, even the Spirit of God, will shed his healing influence over our souls, and preserve us from sinking even under the severest trials.

Another lesson of importance this part of our Saviour's history may teach us.

Extreme affliction, as we all but too well know, has a natural tendency not only to

depress our spirits, but to sour our tempers, and to render us fretful and irritable, and severe towards the failings of others. But how did it operate on our blessed Lord? Instead of injuring, it seemed rather to improve the heavenly mildness of his disposition, and to make him more indulgent to the failings of his followers. For when, in the very midst of all his anguish, they could so far forget his sorrows, and their own professions of attachment to him, as to sink into sleep, how gentle was his reproof to them for this want of sensibility and attention to him: "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" And even this affectionate rebuke he immediately tempers with a kind excuse for them: "the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Judas now, who betrayed our blessed Saviour, gave a sign to those who approached to apprehend him, and they came and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

If it had been the intention of Providence to protect Jesus and his religion by force, a host of angels would have been sent to defend him, as one was actually sent to comfort him. But this would have defeated

the very purpose for which he came into the world, which was, that he should "make his soul an offering for sin." The prophets foretold that he should do so. And besides this, nothing could be more abhorrent, from the spirit of his religion, than force, violence, and bloodshed. The only weapons he made use of were of a different nature, the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, and the armour of righteousness.

Jesus being now in the possession of his enemies, they that had laid hold on him led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled; and while his examination was going on in the council-room, Peter sat without in the palace, and being accused of being with Jesus, he thrice denied him; and immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, who said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

This most interesting story is related by all the evangelists. There is, however, one circumstance added by St. Luke, so exqui-

sitely beautiful and touching, that it well deserves to be noticed here: he tells us, that after Peter had denied Jesus thrice, "immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew; *and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*"

What effect that look must have had on the heart and on the countenance of Peter, every one may, perhaps, in some degree conceive; but it is utterly impossible for any words to describe. The sacred historian therefore simply relates the fact, and only adds, "And Peter remembered the words of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice; and he went out, and wept bitterly."

The reflections that crowd upon the mind from this most affecting incident of Peter's denial of his Master are many and important. I can only touch slightly on a few.

The first is, that this event in the history of St. Peter is a clear and striking accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction, that before the cock crew he should deny him thrice. And there are in this same chapter no less than four other prophecies of our

Lord, which were all punctually fulfilled, some of them, like this, within a few hours after they were delivered.

The next observation resulting from the fall of Peter, is the melancholy proof it affords us of the infirmity of human nature, the weakness of our best resolutions when left to ourselves, and the extreme danger of confiding too much in our own strength. Peter's denial of his Lord has left a memorable lesson, even to the best of men, not to entertain too high an opinion of their own constancy and firmness in the hour of temptation. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

And hence, in the last place, we see the wisdom and the necessity of looking beyond ourselves, of looking up to heaven for support and assistance in the discharge of our duty. If, when Peter was first forewarned by our Lord of his approaching denial of him, instead of repeating his professions of inviolable fidelity to him, he had with all humility confessed his weakness, and implored his divine Master to strengthen and fortify him for the trial that awaited him, the event probably would have been very

different. For when, confiding as he did now in his own courage, he entreated Jesus to let him walk to him upon the sea, and was permitted to do so; no sooner did he find the wind boisterous than he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord save me! and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him." This was a plain intimation to him that it was not his own arm that could help him, but that Almighty hand, and that outstretched arm, which then preserved him; and to which, when in danger, we must all have recourse to prevent us from sinking. "Trust then in the Lord" (as the wise king advises) "with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

LECTURE XXXVIII.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVII.

After the chief priests and elders had in a summary way decided the fate of Jesus, and pronounced him guilty of death, their next care was how to get this sentence confirmed and carried into execution: they determined to carry him before Pilate; and, to ensure success, to give such colour and shape to their accusations as should prevail on the governor to put him to death; for this purpose they changed their ground of accusation, and charged him with treasonable and seditious practices, knowing that Pilate the governor, who was a pagan, would pay little attention to their charge of blasphemy. Accordingly we are told, in the beginning of this chapter, that "when morning was come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death;" that is, to obtain *permission* to put him to death; "and when

they had bound him they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor."

The evangelist having brought the history of this diabolical transaction thus far, makes a short digression, to inform us of the fate of that wretched traitor Judas, who had by his perfidy brought his Master into this situation.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself."

From the character of Judas, I think we must not conclude that by the expression he *repented himself*, that the acquittal or condemnation of Jesus ever entered into his contemplation. All he thought of was gain. He had kept the common purse, and had robbed it; and his only object was how to obtain a sum of money, which he determined to have at all events, and left conse-

quences to take care of themselves. But when he saw that his divine Master, whom he knew to be perfectly innocent, was actually condemned to death, his conscience then flew in his face; his guilt then rose up before him in all its horrors. The innocence, the virtues, the gentleness, the kindness of his Lord, with a thousand other circumstances, rushed at once upon his mind, and painted to him the enormity of his crime in such dreadful colours, that he could no longer bear the agonizing tortures that racked his soul, but went immediately and destroyed himself.

The answer of the chief priests to Judas, "What is that to us? See thou to that," was a perfectly natural one for men of their character. With the guilt or innocence of Jesus they did not concern themselves. All they wanted was the destruction of a man whom they hated and feared, and whose life and doctrine was a standing reproach to them; as to the mercy or the justice of the case, they were at perfect ease; and yet these very men, who had no scruple in murdering an innocent person, had wonderful qualms of conscience about putting into the treasury the money which they themselves

had given as the "*price of blood.*" "The chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for us to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the Field of Blood unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

After this account of Judas Iscariot, the evangelist proceeds in his history.

"And Jesus *stood before the governor.*" Little did that governor imagine who it was that then stood before him. Little did he suspect that he must himself one day stand before the tribunal of that very person whom he was then going to judge as a criminal!

The charge against Jesus before Pilate was sedition and treason. "They began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is

Christ a king." "Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." That is, I am what thou sayest. "And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things those witness against thee? And he answered him never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." Our Lord's conduct on this occasion was truly dignified. When he was called upon to acknowledge what was really true, he gave a direct answer both to the chief priests and to Pilate. He acknowledged that he was the Christ, the Son of God, the King of the Jews; but false, and frivolous, and unjust accusations, he treated as they deserved, with profound and contemptuous silence.

It appears, however, from St. John, that although Jesus declared he was the King of the Jews, yet he explained to Pilate the nature of his kingdom, which he assured him was not of this world. And Pilate, satisfied with this explanation, and seeing clearly that the whole accusation was malicious and groundless, made several efforts to

save Jesus. But every thing that he could do was in vain; for we are told, that "the chief priests and elders *persuaded* the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus."

While this was passing, an extraordinary incident took place, which must needs have made a deep impression on the mind of Pilate. "When he was sat down upon the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." But after redoubling his efforts to save Jesus in vain, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

This was at once a visible declaration of the innocence of Jesus, and of Pilate's reluctance in condemning him. To this the Jews made that answer, which must petrify every heart with horror. "Then answered all the people, and said, *His blood be on us, and on our children.* Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

Let us now look back to the scene we

have been contemplating, and the reflections that arise from it.

It affords a most awful warning to the lower orders of the people to beware of giving themselves up, as they too frequently do, to the direction of artful and profligate leaders, who abuse their simplicity and credulity to the very worst purposes, and make use of them only as tools, to accomplish their own private views of ambition, of avarice, of resentment, or revenge.

And with respect to the judge himself, who was so thoroughly convinced of the innocence of his prisoner, and actually used every means in his power to preserve him, even he had not the honesty and the courage to protect him effectually; and his conduct affords a most dreadful proof what kind of a thing public justice was among the most *enlightened* people in the ancient heathen world. The fact is, he was afraid of the people; he was afraid of Cæsar; he shrunk from the dangers that threatened him, and sacrificed his conscience and his duty to the menaces of a mob, and the dread of sovereign power.

We all know that no dangers, no threats,

no fears could ever induce a British judge to act thus: and what is it that produces this difference between a Roman and a British judge? It is this, that the former had no other principle to govern his conduct but natural reason; whereas the British judge, in addition to his natural sentiments of right and wrong, and the dictates of the moral sense, has the principle of *religion* also to influence his heart; he has the unerring and inflexible rules of evangelical rectitude to guide him; he has that which will vanquish every other fear, the *fear of God,* before his eyes. He knows that he himself must one day stand before the Judge of all.

This is one, among a thousand other proofs, of the benefits we derive, even in the present life, from the Christian revelation. It has, in fact, had a most salutary and beneficial influence on our most important *temporal* interests; and in various ways has left the most evident traces of its benevolent spirit in all the various subordinations, dependencies, and connexions of social life.

But to return to the Roman governor: he endeavoured to clear himself from this guilt,

and to satisfy his conscience, by the vain ceremony of washing his hands before the multitude, and declaring "that he was innocent of the blood of that just person." Alas! not all the water of the ocean could wash away the foul and indelible stain of murder from his soul. Yet he hoped to transfer it to the accomplices of his crime. "See ye to it," says he to the people. And what answer did the people make to him? "*His blood*," said they, "*be on us and on our children.*" A most fatal imprecation, and most dreadfully fulfilled upon them at the siege of Jerusalem, when the vengeance of heaven overtook them with a fury unexampled in the history of the world; when they were exposed at once to the horrors of famine, of sedition, of assassination, and the sword of the Romans. And it is very remarkable that there was a striking correspondence between their crime and their punishment. They put Jesus to death when the nation was assembled to celebrate the passover; and, when the nation was assembled for the same purpose, Titus shut them up within the walls of Jerusalem. The rejection of the true Messiah was their crime, and the

following of false Messiahs to their destruction was their punishment. They bought Jesus as a slave, and they themselves were afterwards sold and bought as slaves, at the lowest prices. They preferred a robber and murderer to Jesus, whom they crucified between two thieves; and they themselves were afterwards infested with bands of thieves and robbers. They put Jesus to death, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation; and the Romans *did* come and take away their place and nation. And what is still more striking, and still more strongly marks the judgment of God upon them, they were punished with that very kind of death which they were so eager to inflict on the Saviour of mankind, the death of the cross; and that in such prodigious numbers, that Josephus assures us there wanted wood for crosses, and room to place them in.

The history then proceeds, and relates the cruelty, mockery, and insult our blessed Saviour experienced previously to his crucifixion.

We turn with averted eyes from this scene of insolence and outrage, and can hardly

bring our minds to believe that any thing in the shape of man could have risen to this height of wanton barbarity.

" And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."

" Then were two thieves crucified with him, the one on the right hand, the other on the left." This was done with a view of adding to the ignominy of our Saviour's sufferings. But this act of malignity, like many other instances of the same nature, answered a purpose which the authors of it little thought of or intended. It was the completion of a prophecy of Isaiah, in which, alluding to this very transaction, he says of the Messiah, " he was numbered with the transgressors." They then continued their insults upon him, even while hanging in agony upon the cross. We are then told, that " from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." The sixth hour of the Jews corresponds to our twelve o'clock, and their

ninth hour of course to our three. There was therefore a darkness over all the earth from twelve at noon till three in the afternoon. This darkness must have been supernatural and miraculous. And at the ninth hour our blessed Saviour breathed his last, having committed himself with boundless confidence to the care of the Almighty: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Thus did Jesus hang no less than six hours in agonies upon the cross. And this, let it never be forgotten, was for us men, and for our salvation! "And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

Such were the convulsions into which the whole frame of nature was thrown, when the Lord of all yielded up his life.

The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; by which was

signified the abolition of the whole Mosaic ritual, the removal of the partition between Jew and Gentile.

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, " Truly this was the Son of God."

The centurion here mentioned was the Roman captain, who, with a guard of soldiers, was ordered to attend the crucifixion of Jesus, and see the sentence executed. He placed himself, as St. Mark informs us, over against Jesus: from that station he kept his eye constantly fixed upon him, and observed with attention every thing he said or did. And when he saw the meekness, the patience, the resignation, the firmness, with which our Lord endured the most excruciating torments; when he heard him at one time fervently praying for his murderers, at another disposing with dignity and authority of a place in Paradise to one of his fellow sufferers; and at length with that confidence which nothing but conscious virtue and conscious dignity could at such time inspire, recommending his spirit into

the hands of his heavenly Father; he could not but conclude him to be a most extraordinary person, and something more than human. But when, moreover, he observed the astonishing events that took place when Jesus expired; the agitation into which the whole frame of nature seemed to be thrown; the supernatural darkness, the earthquake, the rending of rocks, the opening of graves; he then burst out involuntarily into that striking exclamation, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Here then we have a testimony to the divine character of our Lord, which must be considered as in the highest degree impartial and incorrupt; the honest, unsolicited testimony of a plain man, a soldier and a heathen; the testimony, not of one who was prejudiced in favour of Christ and his religion, but of one who, by habit and education, was probably strongly prejudiced against them.

And it is not a little remarkable, that the contemplation of the very same scene which so forcibly struck the Roman centurion, has extorted a similar confession from one of the most eloquent of modern sceptics, who,

though he could bring himself to resist the evidence both of prophecy and of miracles, yet was overwhelmed with the evidence arising from the character, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus. I allude to the celebrated comparison between the death of Socrates and the death of Jesus, drawn by the masterly pen of Rousseau: the passage affords so forcible and so unprejudiced a testimony to the divinity of Christ, and bears so striking a resemblance to that of the centurion, that I shall be pardoned, I trust, for introducing it here as the conclusion of this Lecture.

"Where (says he) is the man, where is the philosopher, who can act, suffer, and die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary just man, covered with all the opprobrium of guilt, yet at the same time meriting the sublimest rewards of virtue, he paints precisely every feature in the character of Jesus Christ. The resemblance is so striking that all the fathers have observed it, and it is impossible to be deceived in it. What prejudice, what blindness, must possess the mind of that man who *dares* to compare the

son of Sophroniscus with the son of Mary! What a distance there is between the one and the other! The death of Socrates, philosophizing calmly with his friends, is the most gentle that can be wished; that of Jesus, expiring in torments, insulted, derided, and reviled by all the people, the most horrible that can be imagined. Socrates, taking the poisoned cup, blesses the man who presents it to him; and who, in the very act of presenting it, melts into tears. Jesus, in the midst of the most agonizing tortures, prays for his enraged persecutors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."

LECTURE XXXIX.

MATTHEW, CHAP. XXVII. XXVIII.

In the preceding Lecture we closed the dismal scene of our Lord's unparalleled sufferings, on which it is impossible to reflect without astonishment and horror, and without asking ourselves this question, Whence

came it to pass that so innocent, so excellent, so divine a person as the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well pleased, should be permitted by his heavenly Father to be exposed to such indignities and cruelties, and finally to undergo the exquisite torments of the cross? The answer is, that the occasion of all this is to be sought for in our own sinful nature, in the depravity and corruption of the human heart, in the extreme wickedness of every kind which overspread the whole world at the time of our Lord's appearance upon earth, and which must necessarily have subjected the whole human race to the severest effects of the divine displeasure, had not some atonement, some expiation, some satisfaction to their offended Maker been interposed between them and the punishment so justly due to them. This expiation, this atonement, the Son of God himself voluntarily consented to become, and paid the ransom required for our deliverance by his own death upon the cross. "He gave himself for us (as the Scriptures express it), an offering and a sacrifice to God. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He suffered for

sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; with his stripes we were healed. In his own blood he washed us from our sins; in his own body he bore our sins upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness." This is that great doctrine of REDEMPTION, which is so fully explained and so strongly insisted on in various parts of the sacred writings, which forms so essential a part of the Christian system, and is the grand foundation of all our hopes of pardon and acceptance at the great day of retribution.

It must be acknowledged, that in the stupendous work of our redemption, there is something far beyond the power of our limited faculties to comprehend.

That the Son of God himself should feel such compassion for the human race, as voluntarily to undertake the great and arduous and painful task of rescuing them from sin and misery and eternal death; that for this purpose he should condescend to quit the bosom of his Father, and the joys of heaven; should divest himself of the glory

that he had before the world began; should not only take upon himself the nature of man, but the form of a servant; should submit to a low and indigent condition, to indignities, to injuries and insults, and at length to a disgraceful and excruciating death, is indeed a mystery, but it is a mystery of kindness and of mercy; it is, as the apostle truly calls it, "a love that passeth knowledge;" a degree of tenderness, pity, and condescension to which we have neither words nor conceptions in any degree equal. It is impossible for us not to cry out on this occasion with the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

That our redemption by Christ is a mystery, a great and astonishing mystery, we readily acknowledge. But this was naturally to be expected, in a work of such infinite difficulty as that of rendering the mercy of God, in pardoning mankind, consistent with the exercise of his justice, and the support of his authority, as the moral Governor of the world. Whatever could effect this, must necessarily be something far beyond

the comprehension of our narrow understandings; that is, must necessarily be mysterious. And therefore this very circumstance, instead of shocking our reason, and staggering our faith, ought to confirm the one, and satisfy the other.

After the crucifixion of our Lord follows the account of his burial by Joseph of Arimathea, who went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus; and having obtained it, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. This was the exact fulfilment of a prophecy in Isaiah, where, speaking of the promised Messiah or Christ, it is said, "he shall make his grave with the rich." And accordingly, Joseph, we are told, was a rich man, and an honourable counsellor.

The chief priests and Pharisees then came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest

his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch.

Here we see the chief priests using every possible precaution to prevent a fraud. For this purpose they went to Pilate to beg for a guard, immediately after our Lord was buried; and one cannot help admiring the wisdom of Providence in so disposing events, that the extreme anxiety of these men, to prevent collusion, should be the means of adding the testimony of sixty unexceptionable witnesses (the number of the Roman soldiers on guard) to the truth of the resurrection, and of establishing the reality of it beyond all power of contradiction.

The relation given by St. Matthew of our Lord's first appearance, after his resurrection, to the women who came to the sepulchre, and the accounts given by the three other evangelists, are substantially the same,

though differing in a few minute circumstances of no moment. I shall therefore confine myself to the main fact of the resurrection, in which all the evangelists agree, and of which the proofs are numerous and clear.

The principal and most obvious are those which arise from the various appearances which Jesus made after his resurrection, to various persons, and at various times.

The first was to Mary Magdalene alone.

The second to her in company with several other women, as we have just seen.

The third to Peter.

The fourth to the two disciples going to Emmaus.

The fifth to the apostles in Jerusalem, when they were assembled with the doors shut on the first day of the week; at which time he showed them his hands and his feet, pierced with the nails, and did eat before them.

The sixth, to the apostles a second time, as they sat at meat, when he satisfied the doubts of the incredulous Thomas, by making him thrust his hand into his side.

The seventh, to Peter and several of his disciples at the lake of Tiberias, when he also ate with them.

The eighth, and last, was to above five hundred brethren at once.

There are then no less than eight distinct appearances of our Lord to his disciples after his resurrection, recorded by the sacred historians. And can we believe that all those different persons could be deceived in these appearances of one whose countenance, figure, voice, and manner they had for so long a time been perfectly acquainted with; and who now, not merely presented himself to their view transiently and silently, but ate and drank and conversed with them, and suffered them to touch and examine him thoroughly, that they might be convinced by all their senses that it was truly their beloved Master, and not a spirit, that conversed with them?

The account therefore of the resurrection given by the evangelists may safely be relied upon as true.

It may, however, be said, that this account is the representation of friends, of those who were interested in asserting the reality of a

resurrection. We give, therefore, the story as told by the Jews and the Romans.

In the eleventh verse of this chapter, St. Matthew informs us, "that as the women were going to tell the disciples that Jesus was risen, behold some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day."

This then is the statement of our adversaries, produced in opposition to that of the evangelists; which the latter simply relate, without any observation upon it, without condescending to make the slightest answer to it, but leaving every man to judge of it for himself. And this indeed they might safely do; for it is a fabrication too gross and too palpable to impose on any man of common

sense. If any person can bring himself to believe that sixty Roman soldiers should be all sleeping at the same time on guard; that they should be able to tell what was done in their sleep; that they should have the boldness to confess that they slept upon their post, when they knew the punishment of such offence to be death; and that the disciples should be so devoid of all common sense as to steal away a dead body, which could not be of the smallest use to them, and instead of proving a resurrection, was a standing proof against it; if any man, I say, can prevail on himself to listen for a moment to such absurdities as these, he may then give credit to the tale of the soldiers; but otherwise must treat it, as it truly deserves, with the most sovereign contempt.

Another proof of the resurrection is the sudden and astonishing change which took place in the language and the conduct of the apostles, immediately after the period when they affirmed that Jesus had risen from the dead. From being, as we have seen, timorous and dejected, and discouraged at the death of their Master, they

suddenly became courageous, undaunted, and intrepid: and they boldly preached that very Jesus whom before they had deserted in his greatest distress. This observation will apply in some degree to all the apostles, but with regard to St. Peter, more particularly, it holds with peculiar force: for after noticing his conduct previous to the crucifixion, let us turn to the fourth chapter of the Acts, and see what his language was after Jesus had actually been put to death.

He and John, having healed the lame man whom they found sitting at the gate of the temple, were apprehended and thrown into prison, and the next day were called upon to answer for their conduct before the high priest, and the other chief rulers of the Jews. And upon being questioned by what power and by what name they had performed this miraculous cure, Peter answered them in these resolute terms: "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye cruci-

fied, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." And when, soon after this, Peter and John were straitly threatened, and commanded not to speak at all or teach, in the name of Jesus, they answered and said unto them, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

In what manner shall we account for this sudden and astonishing alteration in the language of St. Peter? There is, I will venture to assert, no other possible way of accounting for it, but from that very circumstance which St. Peter himself mentions in his speech to the high priest, namely, "that he whom they had crucified was, by the Almighty power of God, raised from the dead."

We have here then one more proof, in

addition to all the rest, of the resurrection of Christ, intelligible to the lowest, and convincing to the most improved understanding.

St. Paul goes so far as to make the belief of this single article the main ground and basis of our salvation. The reason of this is because the belief of the resurrection of Christ unavoidably leads to the belief of the whole Christian religion, to the truth of which God set his seal, by raising the author of it from the dead; and the belief of the Christian revelation, if genuine and sincere, will, with the blessing of God on our own strenuous exertions, produce all those Christian graces and virtues, which, through the merits of our Redeemer, will render our final calling and election sure.

The resurrection of Christ being thus established on the firmest grounds, the conclusions to be drawn from it are many and important; but I shall at present confine myself to two of them, which seem more particularly to deserve our notice.

The first is, that this great event of the resurrection affords a clear and decisive proof that Jesus was, what he pretended to be,

THE SON OF GOD; that the religion he taught came from God; that consequently every doctrine he delivered ought to be believed, every command he gave to be obeyed, and that every thing he promised or threatened will certainly come to pass. For had not his pretensions been well founded, and his religion true, it is impossible that the God of truth could have given them the sanction of his authority, by raising him from the dead. But by doing this, he gave the strongest possible attestation to the reality of his divine mission.

The next inference from this fact is, that the resurrection of Christ is an earnest, a pledge, and a proof of our own. He had promised his disciples, "that where he was, there should they be also." And the Scriptures, in numberless places, assure us that we shall rise again from the grave, and become immortal. "For if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Since then we have such expectations and such hopes, what manner of persons

ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? With what cheerfulness shall we acquiesce under poverty and misfortunes, when we reflect that if we bear them patiently, and hold fast our integrity, these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! With what indifference shall we contemplate the charms of wealth and power, with what horror shall we turn away from the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, when we know that the one *may*, and the other most certainly *will*, cut us off from an eternal and invaluable inheritance!

We are all "strangers and pilgrims upon earth." This world is not our home, though we are too apt to think it so. We belong to another city, we are subjects of a better kingdom, where infinitely greater joys await us than can be described, or that the utmost stretch of imagination can conceive. Every day we live, every moment we breathe, brings us nearer to this country; and the grave itself, dismal as it appears, is nothing more than the gate that leads us into it.

Conscious then of the dignity and import-

ance of our high and heavenly calling, which renders us candidates for the kingdom of God, and heirs of immortality, let us persevere steadily and uniformly in our progress towards those celestial mansions which are prepared for all the faithful servants of Christ; where we shall be released from all the endless anxieties, the vain hopes, and causeless fears that now agitate and disquiet us, and shall, through the merits of our Redeemer, be rewarded, not merely with uninterrupted tranquillity and repose, but with a crown of glory that fadeth not away, with immortality in the kingdom of our Father and our God.

MEMOIR

OF

HERMAN BOERHAAVE,

THE CELEBRATED PHYSICIAN.

He was one of the greatest physicians, as well as the best men, that this, or perhaps any age has ever produced.

A declared foe to all excess, he considered decent mirth as the salt of life. It was the daily practice of this eminent person, through his whole life, as soon as he rose in the morning, which was generally very early, to retire for an hour to private prayer, and meditation on some part of the Scriptures. He often told his friends, when they asked him how it was possible for him to go through so much fatigue? that it was *this* which gave him spirit and vigour in the business of the day. *This* he therefore recommended as *the best rule* he could give: for nothing, he said, could tend more to the health of the

body than the tranquillity of the mind; and that he knew nothing which could support himself, or his fellow creatures, amidst the various distresses of life, but a well grounded confidence in the Supreme Being upon the principles of Christianity. This was strongly exemplified in his own illness in 1722, by which the course of his lectures, as well as his practice, was long interrupted. He was for five months confined to his bed by the gout, where he lay upon his back without daring to attempt the least motion; because any effort renewed his torments, which were so exquisite that he was not only deprived of motion but of sense. This patience was founded, not on vain reasonings, like that of which the Stoics boasted, but on a religious composure of mind, and Christian resignation to the will of God.

Of his sagacity and the wonderful penetration with which he often discovered and described, at the first sight of a patient, such distempers as betray themselves by no symptoms to common eyes, such surprising accounts have been given as scarcely can be credited, though attested beyond all doubt. Yet this great master of medical knowledge

was so far from having a presumptuous confidence in his abilities, or from being puffed up by his riches, that he was condescending to all, and remarkably diligent in his profession: and he often used to say that the life of a patient (if trifled with or neglected) would one day be required at the hand of the physician. He always called the poor his *best patients;* for God (said he) is their paymaster. He was always cheerful, and desirous of promoting every valuable end of conversation, and the excellency of the Christian religion was frequently the subject of it; for he asserted, on all proper occasions, the divine authority and sacred efficacy of the Scriptures, and maintained, that they only could give peace of mind, that sweet and sacred peace which passeth all understanding; since none can conceive it but he who has it, and none can have it but by divine communication. He never regarded calumny or detraction, nor ever thought it necessary to confute them. "They are sparks (said he) which, if you do not blow, will go out of themselves. The surest remedy against scandal is to *live it down* by a perseverance in well doing, and by praying

to God that he would cure the distempered minds of those who traduce and injure us." Being once asked by a friend who had often admired his patience under great provocations, whether he knew what it was to be angry, and by what means he had so entirely suppressed that impetuous and ungovernable passion, he answered, with the utmost frankness and sincerity, that he was naturally quick of resentment, but that he had by daily prayer and meditation at length attained to this mastery over himself.

About the middle of the year 1737, he felt the first approaches of that fatal illness which brought him to the grave; three weeks before his dissolution, when the Rev. Mr. Schultens, one of the most learned and exemplary divines of the age, attended him at his country house, the doctor desired his prayers, and afterwards entered into a most remarkably judicious discourse on the spiritual and immaterial nature of the soul; and this he illustrated with wonderful perspicuity, by a description of the effects which the infirmities of his body had upon his faculties, which yet they did not so oppress or vanquish, but that his soul was always master

of itself, and always resigned to the pleasure of its Maker: and then he added, "He who loves God ought to think nothing desirable but what is most pleasing to the supreme goodness." These were his sentiments, and such was his conduct in this state of weakness and pain. As death approached nearer, he was so far from terror or confusion, that he seemed less sensible of pain, and more cheerful under his torments, which continued till the 23d of September, 1738, on which day he died, in the seventieth year of his age; often recommending to the by-standers a careful observation of St. John's precepts concerning the love of God and the love of man, as frequently inculcated in his first epistle, particularly in the fifth chapter.

POETICAL EXTRACTS.

THE FIRESIDE.

Dear Chloe, while the busy crowd,
The vain, the wealthy, and the proud,
In Folly's maze advance;
Though singularity and pride
Be call'd our choice, we'll step aside,
Nor join the giddy dance.

From the gay world we'll oft retire
To our own family and fire,
Where love our hours employs;
No noisy neighbour enters here,
No intermeddling stranger near,
To spoil our heartfelt joys.

If solid happiness we prize,
Within our breast this jewel lies;
And they are fools who roam:
The world has nothing to bestow;
From our ownselves our joys must flow,
And that dear hut, our home.

Though fools spurn Hymen's gentle powers,
We, who improve his golden hours,
By sweet experience know,
That marriage, rightly understood,
Gives to the tender and the good
A paradise below.

Our babes shall richest comforts bring;
If tutor'd right, they prove a spring
  Whence pleasures ever rise;
We'll form their minds with studious care,
To all that's manly, good, and fair,
  And train them for the skies.

While they our wisest hours engage,
They'll joy our youth, support our age,
  And crown our hoary hairs:
They'll grow in virtue every day,
And thus our fondest loves repay,
  And recompense our cares.

Our portion is not large, indeed;
But then how little do we need!
  For nature's calls are few:
In this the art of living lies,
To want no more than may suffice,
  And make that little do.

We'll therefore relish, with content,
Whate'er kind providence has sent,
  Nor aim beyond our power;
For if our stock be very small,
'Tis prudence to enjoy it all,
  Nor lose the present hour.

We'll ask no long protracted treat,
Since winter life is seldom sweet;
  But, when our feast is o'er,
Grateful from table we'll arise,
Nor grudge our sons with envious eyes
  The relics of our store.

Thus hand in hand through life we'll go,
Its chequer'd paths of joy and woe

With cautious steps we'll tread;
Quit its vain scenes without a tear,
Without a trouble, or a fear,
And mingle with the dead.

While conscience, like a faithful friend,
Shall through the gloomy vale attend,
And cheer our dying breath;
Shall, when all other comforts cease,
Like a kind angel, whisper peace,
And smooth the bed of death.

ON SLANDER.

What is that vice which still prevails,
When almost ev'ry passion fails;
Which with our very dawn begun,
Nor ends but with our setting sun;
Which like a noxious weed can spoil
The fairest flow'rs, and choke the soil?
'Tis Slander—and, with shame I own,
The vice of humankind alone.
Th' insidious sland'ring thief is worse
Than the poor rogue who steals your purse;
Say, he purloins your glittering store;
Who takes your gold takes trash—no more;
Perhaps he pilfers, to be fed—
Ah! guiltless wretch who steals for bread!
But the dark villain who shall aim
To blast, my fair, thy spotless name,
He'd steal a precious gem away,
Steal what both Indies can't repay!

CONTENT.

Life is a sea where storms must rise;
'Tis Folly talks of cloudless skies;
He who contracts his swelling sail,
Eludes the fury of the gale.
Be still, nor anxious thoughts employ;
Distrust embitters present joy:
On God for all events depend;
You cannot want when God's your friend.
Weigh well your part, and do your best;
Leave to your Maker all the rest.
The Hand which form'd thee in the womb
Guides from the cradle to the tomb.
Heaven may not grant thee all thy mind;
Yet say not thou that Heaven's unkind—
God is alike both good and wise
In what he grants and what denies:
Perhaps what goodness gives to-day,
To-morrow goodness takes away.

PRESUMPTION OF DEPENDING ON TO-MORROW.

In human hearts what bolder thoughts can rise,
Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
Where is to-morrow? In another world.
For numbers this is certain; the reverse
Is sure to none; and yet on this perhaps,
As on a rock of adamant, we build
Our mountain hopes; spin out eternal schemes,
And, big with life's futurities, expire.

PROCRASTINATION.

Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead!
Thus on 'till wisdom is push'd out of time,
Year after year it steals, 'till all are fled;
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears
The palm, "that all men are about to live;"
For ever on the brink of being born.
All promise is poor dilatory man,
And that through every stage: when young indeed,
In full content, we sometimes nobly rest,
Unanxious for ourselves; and only wish,
As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise:
At thirty man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
At fifty chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve;
In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves; and re-resolves: then dies the same.

AVARICE OF TIME RECOMMENDED.

Thou think'st it folly to be wise too soon.
Youth is not rich in time; it may be, poor:
Part with it as with money, sparing; pay
No moment, but in purchase of its worth:
Part with it as with life, reluctant; big
With holy hope of nobler time to come.

WASTE OF TIME.

Time's use was doom'd a pleasure; waste, a pain,
That man might feel his error, if unseen;
And, feeling, fly to labour for his cure.
Life's cares are comforts; such by heaven design'd;
He, that has none, must make them, or be wretched.
Cares are employments; and without employ
The soul is on a rack, the rack of rest;
To souls most adverse; action all their joy.

CONSCIENCE.

——— Conscience minutes every fault,
And her dread diary with horror fills:
Not the gross act alone employs her pen:
She dawning purposes of heart explores;
Unnoted, notes each moment misapplied:
In leaves more durable than leaves of brass
Writes our whole history; which death shall read
In every pale delinquent's private ear;
And judgment publish: publish to more worlds
Than this: and endless age in groans resound.
And think'st thou still thou canst be wise too soon?

DEATH OF THE GOOD MAN.

The death-bed of the just is yet undrawn
By mortal hand; it merits a divine.
The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walk

Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.
Fly, ye profane! or else draw near with awe,
For here resistless demonstration dwells;
Here tired dissimulation drops her mask,
Here real and apparent are the same.
You see the man; you see his hold on heaven:
Heaven waits not the last moment, owns its friends
On this side death; and points them out to man;
A lecture, silent, but of sovereign power,
To vice, confusion; and to virtue, peace!
Whatever farce the boastful hero plays,
Virtue alone has majesty in death;
And greater still, the more the tyrant frowns.
At that black hour, which general horror sheds
On the low level of the' inglorious throng,
Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy,
Divinely beam on his exalted soul:
Destruction gild, and crown him for the skies.

DEATH DESIRABLE TO THE AGED.

But was death frightful, what has age to fear?
If prudent, age should meet the friendly foe,
And shelter in his hospitable gloom.
I scarce can meet a monument but holds
My younger: every date cries "Come away!"
And what recalls me? look the world around,
And tell me what: the wisest cannot tell.
With me, the time is come; my world is dead:
A new world rises, and new manners reign:
What a pert race starts up! the strangers gaze,
And I at them; my neighbour is unknown.

TRUTH.

Give conscience leave to speak;
For it will speak ere long—O hear it now,
While useful its advice, its accent mild.
Truth is deposited with man's last hour;
An honest hour, and faithful to her trust.
Truth eldest daughter of the Deity;
Truth, of his council when he made the worlds,
Nor less when he shall judge the worlds he made,
Though silent long, and sleeping ne'er so sound,
Than from her cavern in the soul's abyss,
The goddess bursts in thunder and in flame,
"Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die."

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE.

Present example gets within our guard,
And acts with double force, by few repell'd.
Ambition fires ambition; love of gain
Strikes like a pestilence, from breast to breast;
And inhumanity is caught from man to man,
From smiling man. A slight, a single glance,
And shot at random, often has brought home
A sudden fever to the throbbing heart,
Of envy, rancour, or impure desire.
We see, we hear with peril; safety dwells
Remote from multitude; the world's a school
Of wrong, and what proficients swarm around!
We must or imitate, or disapprove;
Must list as their accomplices, or foes;
That stains our innocence; this wounds our peace.
From nature's birth, hence, wisdom has been smit
With sweet recess, and languish'd for the shade.

LITTLE ATTENTION PAID TO THE WARNINGS OF DEATH.

Is Death, that ever threat'ning, ne'er remote,
That all-important, and that only sure,
(Come when he will) an unexpected guest?
Nay, though invited by the loudest calls
Of blind imprudence, unexpected still?
Though numerous messengers are sent before
To warn his great arrival. What the cause,
The wondrous cause, of this mysterious ill?
All heaven looks down astonish'd at the sight.

UNIVERSAL POWER OF DEATH.

——— Gay trifler, dost thou wrap thy soul
In soft security, because unknown
Which moment is commission'd to destroy?
In death's uncertainty thy danger lies.
Is death uncertain? therefore thou be fix'd;
Fix'd as a sentinel, all eye, all ear,
All expectation of the coming foe.
Rouse, stand in arms, nor lean against thy spear,
Lest slumber steal one moment o'er thy soul,
And fate surprise thee nodding. Watch, be strong,
Thus give each day the merit and renown
Of dying well, though doom'd but once to die.
Nor let life's period hidden (as from most)
Hide too from thee, the precious use of life.

EXALTED STATION.

——— What is station high?
'Tis a proud mendicant; it boasts, and begs;
It begs an alms of homage from the throng,
And oft the throng denies its charity.
Our hearts ne'er bow but to superior worth;
Nor ever fail of their allegiance there.
Can place or lessen us or aggrandize?
Pigmies are pigmies still, though perch'd on Alps,
And pyramids are pyramids in vales.
Has thy new post betray'd thee into pride?
That pride defames humanity, and calls
The being mean, which stuffs or strings can raise.

VIRTUE AND PIETY.

"Are virtue, then, and piety the same?"
No:—piety is more; 'tis virtue's source;
Mother of ev'ry worth, as that of joy.
With piety begins all good on earth;
Conscience, her first law broken, wounded lies;
Enfeebled, lifeless, impotent to good,
A feign'd affection bounds her utmost power:
Some we can't love, but for the Almighty's sake;
A foe to God was ne'er true friend to man.
On piety, humanity is built;
And, on humanity much happiness;
And yet still more on piety itself,

RESOURCES OF A DEJECTED MIND.

Art thou dejected? is thy mind o'ercast?
Thy gloom to chase, go, fix some weighty truth;
Chain down some passion; do some generous good;
Teach ignorance to see; or grief to smile;
Correct thy friend; befriend thy greatest foe;
Or, with warm heart, and confidence divine,
Spring up, and lay strong hold on Him who made thee.
Retire and read thy Bible to be gay;
There truths abound of sov'reign aid to peace:
Ah! do not prize them less, because inspired;
If not inspired, that pregnant page had stood,
Time's treasure! and the wonder of the wise!

THE LAST DAY.

Great day! for which all other days were made;
For which earth rose from chaos; man from earth;
And an eternity, the date of gods,
Descended on poor earth-created man!
Great day of dread, decision, and despair!
At thought of thee each sublunary wish
Lets go its eager grasp, and drops the world;
And catches at each reed of hope in heav'n.
Already is begun the grand assize
In us, in all: deputed conscience scales
The dread tribunal, and forestalls our doom;
Forestalls; and by forestalling, proves it sure.
Who conscience sent, her sentence will support,
And God above assert that God in man.

THE

UNREASONABLENESS OF COMPLAINT.

All, all is right, by God ordain'd, or done;
And who, but God, resumed the friends he gave?
And have I been complaining, then, so long?
Complaining of his favours; pain, and death?
Who without pain's advice would e'er be good?
Who, without death, but would be good in vain?
Pain is to save from pain! all punishment
To make for peace! and death to save from death;
And second death to guard immortal life;
To rouse the careless, the presumptuous awe,
And turn the tide of souls another way;
By the same tenderness divine ordain'd,
That planted Eden, and high-bloom'd for man,
A fairer Eden, endless in the skies.

CONTEMPLATION OF THE HEAVENS.

Divine Instructor! thy first volume, this,
For man's perusal; all in capitals!
In moon and stars (heaven's golden alphabet!)
Emblazed to seize the sight; who runs may read;
Who reads, can understand: 'tis unconfined
To Christian land or Jewry; fairly writ,
In language universal, to mankind;
A language, lofty to the learn'd; yet plain
To those that feed the flock or guide the plough:
A language worthy the great Mind that speaks!
Preface and comment to the sacred page!
Stupendous book of wisdom, to the wise!
Stupendous book! and open'd, Night! by thee.

THE MISERY OF SIN.

O THOU, ambitious of disgrace alone!
Rank coward to the fashionable world!
Art thou ashamed to bend thy knee to heaven?
Not all those luminaries, quench'd at once,
Were half so sad as one benighted mind,
Which gropes for happiness, and meets despair.
How like a widow in her weeds, the night,
Amid her glimmering tapers, silent sits!
How sorrowful, how desolate, she weeps
Perpetual dews, and saddens nature's scene!
A scene more sad sin makes the darken'd soul;
All comfort kills, nor leaves one spark alive.

SOLITUDE.

O SACRED Solitude! divine retreat!
Choice of the prudent! envy of the great!
By thy pure stream, or in thy waving shade,
We court fair wisdom, that celestial maid:
The genuine offspring of her loved embrace
(Strangers on earth!) are innocence and peace:
There, from the ways of men laid safe ashore,
We smile to hear the distant tempest roar;
There, blest with health, with business unperplex'd,
This life we relish, and ensure the next.

THE PIOUS PETITION.

Grant I may ever, at the morning ray,
Open with prayer the consecrated day;
Tune thy great praise, and bid my soul arise,
And with the mounting sun ascend the skies!
And, oh, permit the gloom of solemn night
To sacred thought may forcibly invite.
Teach me, with equal firmness, to sustain
Alluring pleasure, and assaulting pain.
O may I pant for Thee in each desire,
And with strong faith foment the holy fire!
Stretch out my soul in hope, and grasp the prize
Which in Eternity's deep bosom lies!
At the great day of recompence behold,
Devoid of fear, the fatal book unfold!
Then, wafted upward to the blissful seat,
From age to age my grateful song repeat;
My Light, my Life, my God, my Saviour see,
And rival angels in the praise of Thee!

REFLECTIONS ON A FUTURE STATE, FROM A REVIEW OF WINTER.

'Tis done! dread Winter spreads his latent glooms,
And reigns tremendous o'er the conquer'd year.
How dead the vegetable kingdom lies!
How dumb the tuneful! Horror wide extends
His desolate domain. Behold, fond man!
See here thy pictured life: pass some few years,
Thy flowering spring, thy summer's ardent strength,

Thy sober autumn fading into age,
And pale concluding winter comes at last,
And shuts the scene. Ah! whither now are fled
Those dreams of greatness? those unsolid hopes
Of happiness? those longings after fame?
Those restless cares? those busy bustling days?
Those gay-spent, festive nights? those veering thoughts
Lost between good and ill, that shared thy life?
All now are vanish'd! Virtue sole survives;
Immortal never-failing friend of man,
His guide to happiness on high.
Ye good distress'd!
Ye noble few! who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile,
And what your bounded view, which only saw
A little part, deem'd evil, is no more:
The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded spring encircle all.

ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

If ev'ry rule of equity demands
That vice and virtue, from th' Almighty's hands
Should due rewards and punishments receive,
And this by no means happens whilst we live;
It follows, that a time must surely come
When each shall meet their well adjusted doom:
Then shall this scene, which now to human sight
Seems so unworthy Wisdom infinite,
A system of consummate skill appear,
And ev'ry cloud dispersed, be beautiful and clear.
Doubt we of this? What solid proof remains,
That o'er the world a wise Disposer reigns?

Whilst all creation speaks a power divine,
Is it deficient in the main design?
Not so: the day shall come (pretend not now,
Presumptuous, to inquire or when, or how,
But) after death shall come th' important day,
When God to all his justice shall display;
Each action with impartial eyes regard,
And in a just proportion punish and reward.

SUICIDE.

Hold, rash man! think, O think;
And, ere thou plunge into the vast abyss,
Pause on the verge awhile: look down and see
Thy future mansion. Why that start of horror?
From thy slack hand why drops th' uplifted steel?
Didst thou not think such vengeance must await
The wretch that, with his crimes all fresh about him,
Rushes irreverent, unprepared, uncall'd,
Into his Maker's presence?

HYMN TO HUMANITY.

Parent of virtue! if thine ear
Attend not now to Sorrow's cry;
If now the pity-streaming tear
Should haply on thy cheek be dry;
Indulge my votive strain, O sweet Humanity.

Come, ever welcome to my breast!
A tender, but a cheerful guest.

O never let me cease to know
The pulse that throbs at joy or woe,
Nor let my vacant cheek be dry
When sorrow fills a brother's eye.

If the fair star of fortune smile,
Let not its flattering power beguile;
Nor, borne along the fav'ring tide,
My full sails swell with bloating pride;
Let me from wealth but hope content,
Remembering still it was but lent;
To modest merit spread my store,
Unbar my hospitable door;
Nor feed for pomp an idle train,
While want unpitied pines in vain.

If heaven, in every purpose wise,
The envied lot of wealth denies;
If doom'd to drag life's painful load
Through poverty's uneven road;
To thee, Humanity, still true,
I'll wish the good I cannot do;
And give the wretch, that passes by,
A soothing word—a tear—a sigh.

O for that sympathetic glow
Which taught the holy tear to flow,
When the prophetic eye survey'd
Sion in future ashes laid;
Or, raised to heaven, implored the bread
That thousands in the desert fed!
It comes: it fills my labouring breast;
I feel my beating heart oppress'd.

Oh! hear that lonely widow's wail!
See her dim eye! her aspect pale!

To heaven she turns in deep despair,
Her infants wonder at her prayer,
And, mingling tears they know not why,
Lift up their little hands, and cry.
O God! their moving sorrows see!
Support them, sweet Humanity!

Life, fill'd with grief's distressful train,
For ever asks the tear humane.
Assist them, hearts from anguish free!
Assist them, sweet Humanity!

RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

Should fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song; when first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on the' Atlantic isles; 'tis nought to me:
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where He vital spreads there must be joy.
When e'en at last, the solemn hour shall come,
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,
I cheerful will obey; there, with new powers,
Will rising wonders sing: I cannot go
Where universal Love not smiles around—
Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their suns:
From *seeming evil* still educing good,
And *better* thence again, and *better* still,
In infinite progression.—But I lose
Myself in Him, in light ineffable!
Come then, expressive silence, muse his praise.

THE FALL OF MAN.

Forth from his Maker's hands man sprung to life,
Fresh with immortal bloom; no pain he knew,
No fear of change, no check to his desires,
Save one command. That one command, which stood
'Twixt him and death, the test of his obedience,
Urged on by wanton curiosity,
He broke. There in one moment was undone
The fairest of God's works. The same rash hand,
That pluck'd in evil hour the fatal fruit,
Unbarr'd the gates of hell, and let loose Sin
And Death, and all the family of Pain,
To prey upon mankind.

INTEMPERANCE.

In the' embattled plain,
Though Death exults, and claps his raven wings,
Yet reigns he not e'en there so absolute,
So merciless, as in yon frantic scenes
Of midnight revel and tumultuous mirth,
Where in the' intoxicating draught conceal'd,
Or couch'd beneath the glance of lawless love,
He snares the simple youth, who, nought suspecting,
Means to be bless'd—but finds himself undone.
Down the smooth stream of life the stripling darts,
Gay as the morn; bright glows the vernal sky,
Hope swells his sails, and passion steers his course—
Safe glides his little bark along the shore
Where Virtue takes her stand; but if too far
He launches forth, beyond discretion's mark,

Sudden the tempest scowls, the surges roar,
Blot his fair day, and plunge him in the deep;
Torn immature from life's meridian joys,
A prey to Vice, Intemp'rance, and Disease.

HYMN ON THE SEASONS.

These as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the *varied* God. The rolling year
Is full of Thee. Forth in the pleasing Spring
Thy beauty walks, thy tenderness and love.
Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;
And every sense and every heart is joy.
Then comes thy glory in the Summer months,
With light and heat refulgent. Then thy sun
Shoots full perfection through the swelling year:
And oft thy voice in dreadful thunder speaks,
And oft at dawn, deep noon, or falling eve,
By brooks and groves, in hollow-whispering gales.
Thy bounty shines in Autumn unconfined,
And spreads a common feast for all that lives.
In Winter awful thou! with clouds and storms
Around Thee thrown, tempest o'er tempest roll'd,
Majestic darkness! On the whirlwind's wing,
Riding sublime, Thou bidd'st the world adore,
And humblest nature with thy northern blast.

OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

FROM PSALM CXXXIX.

O DREAD Jehovah! thy all-piercing eyes
Explore the motions of this mortal frame,—
Where'er I move, thy cares pursue my feet,
Attendant. When I drink the dews of sleep,
Stretch'd on my downy bed, and there enjoy
A sweet forgetfulness of all my toils,
Unseen, thy sov'reign presence guards my sleep,
Wafts all the terrors of my dreams away,
Soothes all my soul, and softens my repose.
Then whither shall the rapid fancy run,
Though in its full career, to speed my flight
From thy unbounded presence, which, alone,
Fills all the regions and extended space
Beyond the bounds of nature? Whither, Lord!
Shall my unrein'd imagination rove
To leave behind thy Spirit?
If mounted on my tow'ring thoughts I climb
Into the heaven of heavens, I there behold
The blaze of thy unclouded majesty!
If I plunge
Down to the gloom of Tartarus profound,
There too I find thee.
If, on the ruddy morning's purple wings
Upborne, with indefatigable course
I seek the glowing borders of the east,
Where the bright sun, emergent from the deeps,
With his first glories gilds the sparkling seas,
And trembles o'er the waves, e'en there thy hand
Shall through the watery desert guide my course,
And o'er the broken surges pave my way,

While on the dreadful whirls I hang secure,
And mock the warring ocean.
How dear, how rooted in my inmost soul
Are all thy counsels, and the various ways
Of thy eternal providence!
When I rise
From my soft bed, and softer joys of sleep,
I rise to thee. O Lord, explore my soul!
See if a flaw or stain of sin infects
My guilty thoughts: then, lead me in the way
That guides my feet to thy own heaven and thee.

DEITY.

A NOBLE theme demands my sacred song,
A theme beyond or man's or angel's tongue!
But oh, alas! unhallow'd and profane,
How shall I dare to raise the heav'nly strain?
Do thou, who from the altar's living fire
Isaiah's tuneful lips didst once inspire,
Come to my aid, celestial Wisdom, come;
From my dark mind dispel the doubtful gloom:
My passions still, my purer breast inflame,
To sing that God from whom existence came;
Till heaven and nature in the concert join,
And own the Author of their birth divine.
First Cause of causes! Sire supreme of birth!
Sole light of heaven! acknowledged life of earth!
Whose word from nothing call'd this beauteous whole,
This wide expanded All from pole to pole!
Who shall prescribe the boundary to thee,
Or fix the æra of eternity?
In him from whom existence boundless flows,
Let humble faith its sacred trust repose:

Assured, on his eternity depend,
" Eternal Father! and eternal Friend!"
And, lost in adoration, breathe his praise;
High Rock of ages, ancient Sire of days!
Exalted Power, invisible, supreme,
Thou sov'reign, sole unutterable name!
As round thy throne thy flaming seraphs stand,
And touch the golden lyre with trembling hand;
Transported with the ardours of thy praise,
The holy! holy! holy! anthem raise!
To them responsive, let creation sing,
Thee, indivisible eternal King!

OMNIPRESENCE.

Through the unmeasurable tracts of space,
Go, Muse divine! and present Godhead trace!
See where, by place uncircumscribed as time,
He reigns extended, and he shines sublime!
Shouldst thou above the heaven of heavens ascend,
Couldst thou below the depth of depths descend,
Could thy fond flight beyond the starry sphere
The radiant morning's lucid pinions bear,
There should his brighter presence shine confess'd,
There his Almighty arm thy course arrest!
Couldst thou the thickest veil of night assume,
Or think to hide thee in the central gloom!
Yet there, all patient to his piercing sight,
Darkness itself would kindle into light:
Not the black mansions of the silent grave,
Nor darker hell, from his perception save;
What power, alas! thy footsteps can convey
Beyond the reach of omnipresent day?
On earth his footstool fix'd, in heaven his seat;
Enthroned he dictates, and his word is fate.

Then, sacred Muse, by the vast prospect fired,
From Heaven descended, as by Heaven inspired;
His all-enlight'ning Omnipresence own,
Whence first thou feel'st thy dwindling presence known,
And bless the' Eternal, all-informing Soul,
Whose sight pervades, whose knowledge fills the whole!

IMMUTABILITY.

As the Eternal and Omniscient Mind,
By laws not limited, nor bounds confined,
Is always independent, always free,
Hence shines confess'd Immutability!
And He, all perfect, in himself contains
Power self-derived, and from himself he reigns!
Knows no addition, yields to no decay,
The blaze of incommunicable day!
Placed in this narrow clouded spot below,
We darkly see around, and darkly know!
Religion lends the salutary beam,
That guides our reason through the dubious gleam;
Till sounds the hour, when he who rules the skies
Shall bid the curtain of Omniscience rise!
Shall dissipate the mists that veil our sight,
And show his creatures—*all his ways are right!*
Then, when astonish'd nature feels its fate,
And fetter'd time shall know his latest date;
When earth shall in the mighty blaze expire,
Heaven melt with heat, and worlds dissolve in fire!
The universal system shrink away,
And ceasing orbs confess the' Almighty sway!
Immortal He, amidst the wreck secure,
Shall sit exalted, permanently pure!
As in the sacred bush, shall shine the same,
And from the ruin raise a fairer frame!

WISDOM.

O THOU, who, when the' Almighty form'd this all,
Upheld the scale, and weigh'd each balanced ball;
And as his hand completed each design,
Number'd the work, and fix'd the seal divine;
O Wisdom infinite! creation's soul,
Whose rays diffuse new lustre o'er the whole,
What tongue shall make thy charms celestial known?
What hand, fair Goddess! paint thee but thy own?
What though in nature's universal store
Appear the wonders of almighty power;
Power, unattended, terror would inspire,
Awed must we gaze, and comfortless admire.
But when fair Wisdom joins in the design,
The beauty of the whole result's divine!
Hence life acknowledges its glorious Cause,
And matter owns its great Disposer's laws;
Hence in a thousand different models wrought,
Now fix'd to quiet, now allied to thought;
Hence flow the forms and properties of things,
Hence rises harmony, and order springs;
Else had the mass a shapeless chaos lay,
Nor ever felt the dawn of Wisdom's day!
O gracious God, omnipotent and wise,
Unerring Lord, and Ruler of the skies!
All-condescending, to my feeble heart
One beam of thy celestial light impart;
I seek not sordid wealth, or glittering power;
O grant me Wisdom—and I ask no more.

PROVIDENCE.

When man too long the paths of vice pursued,
Thy hand prepared the universal flood;
Gracious, to Noah gave the timely sign,
To save a remnant from the wrath divine!
One shining waste the globe terrestrial lay,
And the ark heaved along the troubled sea;
Thou bad'st the deep his ancient bed explore,
The clouds their wat'ry deluge pour'd no more!
The skies were clear'd—the mountain tops were seen,
The dove pacific brought the olive green.
On Ararat the happy Patriarch toss'd,
Found the recover'd world his hopes had lost;
Its precious freight the guardian ark display'd,
While Noah grateful adoration paid!
Beholding in the many-tinctured bow
The promise of a safer world below.
——Thou great Intelligence supreme,
Sov'reign Director of this mighty frame,
Whose watchful hand, and all observing ken,
Fashions the hearts, and views the ways of men;
Whether thy hand the plenteous table spread,
Or measure sparingly the daily bread;
Whether or wealth or honours gild the scene,
Or wants deform, and wasting anguish stain;
On thee let truth and virtue firm rely,
Bless'd in the care of thy approving eye!
Know that thy Providence, their constant friend,
Through life shall guard them, and in death attend;
With everlasting arms their cause embrace,
And crown the paths of piety with peace.

GOODNESS.

Oh man, degenerate man! offend no more!
Go learn of brutes thy Maker to adore!
Shall these through ev'ry tribe his bounty own,
Of all his works ungrateful thou alone!
Deaf when the tuneful voice of mercy cries,
And blind when sov'reign Goodness charms the eyes!
Mark how the wretch his awful name blasphemes,
His pity spares—his clemency reclaims!
Observe his patience with the guilty strive,
And bid the criminal repent and live;
Recall the fugitive with gentle eye,
Beseech the obstinate he would not die!
Amazing tenderness—amazing most,
The soul on whom such mercy should be lost!
But wouldst thou view the rays of goodness join
In one strong point of radiance all divine,
Behold, celestial Muse! yon eastern light,
To Bethlem's plain, adoring, bend thy sight!
Hear the glad message to the shepherds given,
'Good will on earth to man, and peace in heaven!'
Attend the swains, pursue the starry road,
And hail to earth the Saviour and the God!
Redemption! oh thou beauteous mystic plan!
Thou salutary source of life to man!
What tongue can speak thy comprehensive grace?
What thought thy depths unfathomable trace?
When lost in sin our ruin'd nature lay,
When awful justice claim'd her righteous pay!
See the mild Saviour bend his pitying eye,
And stop the lightning just prepared to fly!
(O strange effect of unexampled love!)
View him descend the heavenly throne above;

Patient, the ills of mortal life endure,
Calm, though reviled, and innocent, though poor!
Uncertain his abode, and coarse his food,
His life one fair continued scene of good;
For us sustain the wrath to man decreed,
The victim of eternal justice bleed!
Look! to the cross the Lord of life is tied,
They pierce his hands, and wound his sacred side!
See God expires! our forfeit to atone,
While nature trembles at his parting groan!
Advance, thou hopeless mortal, steel'd in guilt,
Behold, and, if thou canst, forbear to melt!
Shall Jesus die thy freedom to regain,
And wilt thou drag the voluntary chain?
Wilt thou refuse thy kind assent to give,
When dying he looks down to bid thee live?
Perverse, wilt thou reject the proffer'd good,
Bought with his life, and streaming in his blood?
Whose virtue can thy deepest crimes efface,
Re-heal thy nature, and confirm thy peace!
Can all the errors of thy life atone,
And raise thee from a rebel to a son!
O blest Redeemer, from thy sacred throne,
Where saints and angels sing thy triumphs won!
From that exalted height of bliss supreme,
Look down on those who bear thy sacred name;
Restore their ways, inspire them by thy grace,
Thy laws to follow, and thy steps to trace;
Thy bright example to thy doctrine join,
And by their morals prove their faith divine!

INVITATION.

HENCE, distant far, ye sons of earth profane,
The loose, ambitious, covetous, or vain:
But come, ye purer souls, from dross refined,
The blameless heart and uncorrupted mind!
Let your chaste hands the holy altars raise,
Fresh incense bring, and light the glowing blaze;
Your grateful voices aid the Muse to sing
The spotless justice of th' Almighty King!
'Tis in that awful all-disclosing day,
When high Omniscience shall her books display;
When Justice shall present her strict account,
While Conscience shall attest the due amount,
That all who feel, condemn'd, the dreadful nod,
Shall own that righteous are the ways of God!
Oh then, while penitence can fate disarm,
While lingering Justice yet withholds its arm;
While heavenly patience grants the precious time,
Let the lost sinner think him of his crime;
Immediate, to the seat of mercy fly,
Nor wait to-morrow—lest to-night ye die!
And you, ye happier souls! who in his ways
Observant walk, and sing his daily praise;
Ye righteous few! whose calm unruffled breasts
No fears can darken, and no guilt infests;
Ye sons of life, to whose glad hope is given
The bright reversion of approaching heaven,
With grateful hearts his glorious praise recite,
Whose love from darkness call'd you out to light;
So let your piety reflective shine,
As men may thence confess his truth divine!
And when this mortal veil, as soon it must,
Shall drop, returning to its native dust,
The work of life with approbation done,
Receive from God your bright immortal crown.

GLORY.

But oh! advent'rous Muse, restrain thy flight,
Dare not the blaze of uncreated Light!
Before whose glorious throne with dread surprise,
The' adoring seraph veils his dazzled eyes;
Whose pure effulgence, radiant to excess,
No colours can describe, or words express!
Transcendent Power! sole arbiter of fate!
How great thy glory! and thy bliss how great!
To view from thy exalted throne above,
(Eternal source of light, and life, and love!)
Unnumber'd creatures draw their smiling birth,
To bless the heav'ns, or beautify the earth;
While systems roll, obedient to thy view,
And worlds rejoice—which Newton never knew.
Great Lord of life! from whom this humble frame
Derives the power to sing thy holy name,
Forgive the lowly Muse, whose artless lay
Has dared thy sacred attributes survey!
Delighted oft through nature's beauteous field,
Has she adored thy wisdom bright reveal'd;
Oft have her wishes aim'd the secret song,
But awful rev'rence still withheld her tongue.
Yet as thy bounty lent the reas'ning beam,
As feels my conscious breast thy vital flame,
So, blest Creator, let thy servant pay
His mite of gratitude this feeble way;
Thy Goodness own, thy Providence adore,
And yield thee only—what was thine before.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

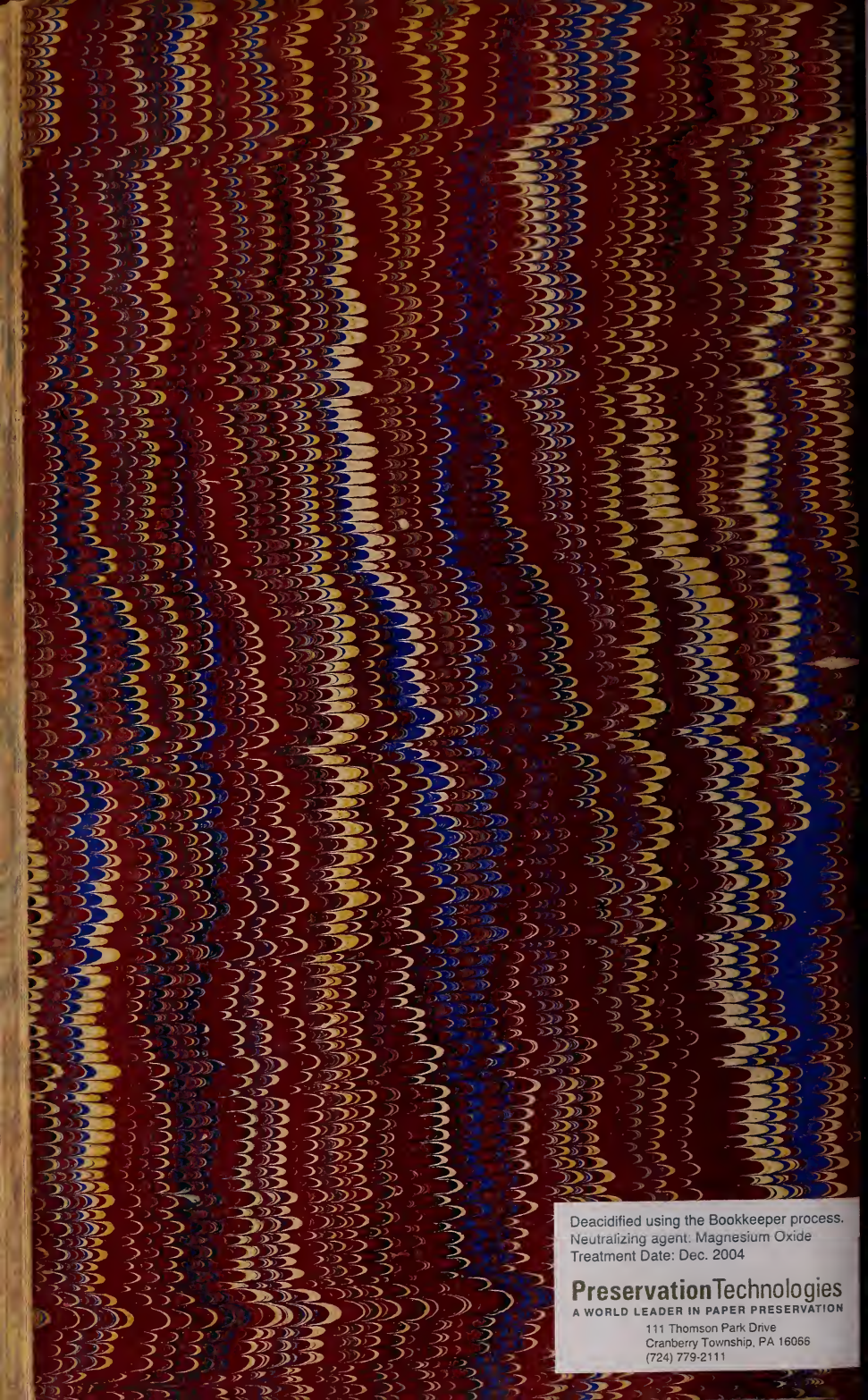
Thy Justice, heavenly King! and that great day,
When Virtue, long abandon'd and forlorn,
Shall raise her pensive head; and Vice, that erst
Rang'd unreproved and free, shall sink appall'd;
I sing advent'rous———
——— I raise
My feeble voice to tell what harmony
(Sweet as the music of the rolling spheres)
Attunes the moral world: that Virtue still
May hope her promised crown; that Vice may dread
Vengeance, though late; that reas'ning Pride may own
Just, though unsearchable, the ways of Heaven!
Sceptic! whoe'er thou art, who say'st the soul,
That divine particle which God's own breath
Inspired into the mortal mass, shall rest
Annihilate: tell then, why in each breast
Is placed a friendly monitor, that prompts,
Informs, directs, encourages, forbids?
Tell, why on unknown evil grief attends,
Or joy on secret good? Why conscience acts
With tenfold force when sickness, age, or pain
Stands tott'ring on the precipice of death?
Or why such horror gnaws the guilty soul
Of dying sinners, while the good man sleeps
Peaceful and calm, and with a smile expires?
——— Shall good and ill
Be carried undistinguish'd to the land
Where all things are forgot? Ah, no! the day
Will come when Virtue from the clouds shall burst,
That long obscured her beams; when Sin shall fly

Back to her native hell; there sink eclipsed
In penal darkness; where nor star shall rise,
Nor ever sunshine pierce the' impervious gloom.
On that great day the solemn trump shall sound;
The' unpeopled graves shall pour forth all their dead.
——— All at once shall rise,
But not to equal glory; for, alas!
With howlings dire, and execrations loud,
Some wail their fatal birth.
No hope have they from black despair, no ray
Shines through the gloom to cheer their sinking souls.
These on the left are ranged: but on the right,
Here is that fav'rite band, whom mercy mild,
God's best-loved attribute, adorn'd; whose gate
Stood ever open to the stranger's call;
Who fed the hungry; to the thirsty lip
Reach'd out the friendly cup; whose care benign
From the rude blast secured the pilgrim's side;
Who heard the widow's tender tale, and shook
The galling shackle from the prisoner's feet;
Who each endearing tie, each office knew
Of meek-eyed, heaven-descended Charity.
Such is that awful, that tremendous day,
Whose coming who shall tell? For as a thief,
Unheard, unseen, it steals with silent pace
Through night's dark gloom. Perhaps as here I sit,
And rudely carol these incondite lays,
Soon shall the hand be check'd, and dumb the mouth
That lisps the faltering strain. O may it ne'er
Intrude unwelcome on an ill spent hour;
But find me wrapt in meditations high,
Hymning my great Creator!
——— "Power Supreme!
O everlasting King! to thee I kneel,
To thee I lift my voice. With fervent heat

Melt, all ye elements! And thou, high heaven,
Shrink like a shrivel'd scroll! But think, O Lord,
Think on the best, the noblest of thy works;
Think on thine own bright image! Think on Him
Who died to save us from thy righteous wrath;
And 'midst the wreck of worlds remember man!"

THE END.

C. and C. Whittingham, College House, Chiswick.



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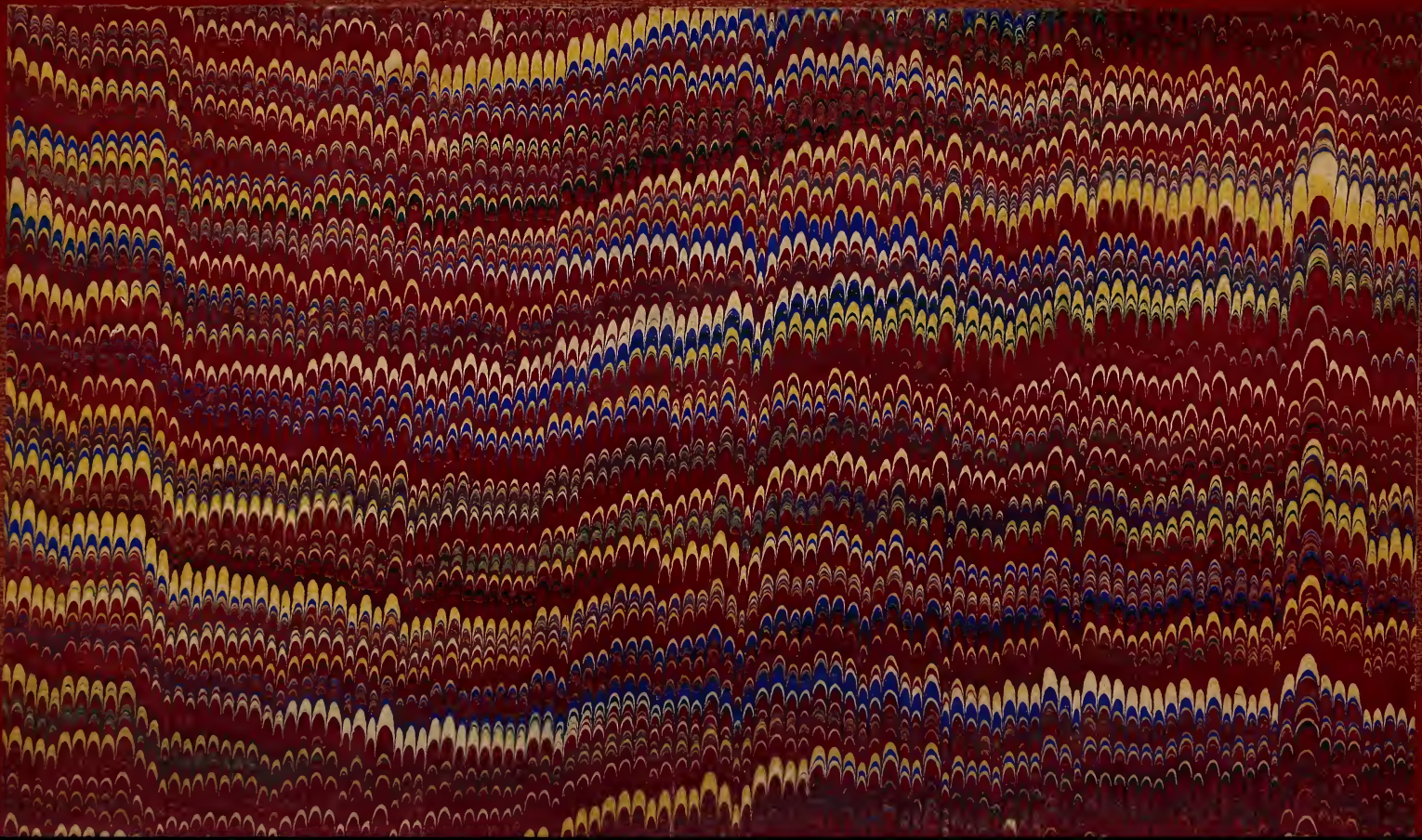

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